

B E L I N D A,

OR

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.





1840  
B E L I N D A,

O R

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

A N O V E L.

BY MRS. C—.

DEDICATED TO

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

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*Hard is the fortune which the Fair attends.*

LYTT.

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D U B L I N:

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IV  
D I C T I O N  

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TO

HER GRACE

THE

DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

**T**HERE are few Authors,  
especially of Romances and Novels,  
who have not deviated in some Measure  
from the Rules of Grammar or Nature.  
The Style is generally too pompous or  
too

too common : but the Writer of these Sheets flatters herself that the Reader will find nothing to surpass probability; and that Simplicity, more than Bombast, has been the Author's Guide.

With this Consideration, she begs Leave to offer it to the Public, assured of their candid Liberality; and to dedicate it to your Grace, as the only Person worthy the Notice of a Writer of these Kind of Romances—for it is well known that your Grace has patronized many Works of Literature; and if the following Narrative is found worthy your espousal, the  
Writer

## D E D I C A T I O N .

Writer is amply rewarded for her Pains, if not—greater the Honor that is conferred upon the Author.

So many of these Works have been already produced by the Pens of Ladies, that the Majority of Critics deem them unworthy their Perusal: but if Ladies supply the Stage, why not the Library? and a good Novel in my opinion answers the same purpose as a good Play.

Should my Pen ever aim at any Thing higher than a Novel, there is no person I would sooner inscribe it to than his Grace your Husband ; being  
by

by all the World allowed to be a Man  
of Sense and Generosity: I pray then,  
Madam, accept this as *your* Right,  
and what I next produce I will deem  
*his*, to assure both your Graces that I  
am

Your most respectful

And obedient Servant,

C—



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# B E L I N D A:

O R,

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

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## C H A P T E R I.

SIR John Maynard and Mr. Mennill had for some months met at the same tavern, had sociably drank their bottle of port together, talk'd over the news of the day, and found to their mutual satisfaction that their sentiments on most subjects were pretty nearly the same. Of course a friend-

B

ship

ship had insensibly commenced between them, and if at any time either of them failed coming to their usual rendezvous, the other found a blank which none of the rest of the company could so well fill up to his mind. Yet with all this intimacy and cordiality they had never met any where else, nor were they in the least acquainted with each other's family or connections: both great politicians, and no less fond of their bottle, domestic matters had never occurred to them. One evening however Mr. Mennill, after expressing the satisfaction he had so long received from Sir John's acquaintance, said "pray, my good friend, have you a son? if you have, and he is as pleasant a companion as I have found you to be, what say you to making a match between him and my daughter? I can give her thirty thousand pounds, and will do it if she marries a young fellow after my own heart, if not, not a fix-pence. She is a fine girl, and I believe, as the world goes, a good one."

Sir

Sir John smiled at this blunt proposal : but knowing his friend was by no means a man of ceremony, replied he had two, and either of them was perfectly at the young lady's service ; he wished for nothing more anxiously than to see them well settled, that he might have no farther care.

“ Two,” replied Mr. Mennill, “ is exactly one too many ; since your estate and title must of course go to the eldest, and it does not follow that he is the most deserving ; at least I have observed the younger are generally the finest fellows ; yet with my girl's fortune that will never do. However there is no rule without exception ; your eldest may have the advantage in every respect, and I know not at this moment a man whose alliance would please me better than your own. My wife has been dead some years. My daughter, I take it for granted, begins to think 'tis high time she should figure in a house of her own ; mine, to say truth, is not calculated to afford her all the satisfaction she might expect. There are

some circumstances rather awkward attending it ; yet a man cannot give up every satisfaction merely to please his children. The truth is, Sir John, I have a sort of tenderness for a certain person in my family, who, tho' she suits me very well, I do not think quite so eligible a companion for my girl ; our connection was formed before Belinda left school. You are the only person I have let into this secret. These things will happen, you know, Sir John ; I have had one wife, so ought every good subject ; but I found one enough. Yet—you understand me—now this matter considered, as my daughter must marry one day or other I suppose, why the sooner the better—not that I will throw her away neither—I know by experience the value of money ; 'tis the *summum bonum* of this world ; with it a man may command all that's worth enjoying in it, without it nothing. This is my maxim, nor shall I be easily persuaded to adopt any other, and, if I do not very much mistake your character, Sir John, you are of the same opinion.

Love



Love is a mighty pretty thing for girls in their teens to talk about ; but a few years experience never fails to convince them 'tis of no other use."

" You are perfectly right," replied Sir John ; " and talk like a man who knows the world ; but young folks are not easily made converts to this doctrine."

" True," said Mr. Mennill ; " but when a father knows he is right, I presume he is at liberty to make converts of his children by whatever means he finds most likely to succeed. Now a coach and six, or beggary, is the kind of alternative few girls in these days I fancy would be long at a loss to decide upon."

" Why no as you say," answered Sir John, " the difference is pretty striking I confess ; but you forget that a fine girl may chance to chuse for herself an agreeable medium. She may meet with a man who  
will

will take her without sixpence—what then comes of your threatened beggary?”

“ Oh, most welcome, I desire no better,” cried his friend; “ all I say is, that my fortune shall never be bestowed upon any man who does not bring an equivalent; and now let me ask you, Sir John, where your two sons are, as I am impatient to have this business happily settled.”

“ I most cordially join in your wishes,” answered his friend, “ and have the pleasure to tell you, my eldest boy is, unless a father’s partiality blinds me, not only the handsomest, but as spirited a young fellow as any in the three kingdoms. No two beings were ever greater contrasts to each other than him and his brother; they are the produce of different mothers; for I, tho’ my ideas of matrimony are pretty much like your own, was by some means or other drawn into the snare twice; the first I married from prudential motives, as in fact every wise man ought to do; but I was fool  
enough

enough to be caught by a pair of bright eyes the second time; that is to say I married for love. Yet in point of happiness, upon the whole a feather would have turned the scale after those bewitching eyes were grown familiar to mine. Be that as it will, my first certainly knew best what sort of heir I wished should enjoy my estate; and on that account, if not on several others, deserved the preference; for my beauty produced me a mere bookworm; his whole delight is in study, nor do I believe the finest eyes that ever sparkled would have power to draw *his* from the contemplation of the stars. Yet if you should chance to like his character the best, in point of fortune they are nearly on a par, for an uncle of Edmond's, who has the civility to insist upon it that Charles, my eldest, is neither more nor less than a compleat coxcomb, has set his brother down as his heir. Like to like, you know, Mr. Mennill, as the proverb says; for he too you may guess by what I have said, is a profound scholar, which between ourselves I look upon to be  
a profound

a profound farce : what have we, who are born to inherit good estates, to do with Greek and Latin ; if a fellow wants bread, and can contrive to get it by that means, well and good ; but does a man make a more brilliant figure in society because his head is filled with languages no mortal either speaks or cares whether he can speak or not. The very reverse—while learning these, the more essential accomplishments are neglected, nay despised, and he comes from college a mere savage. Now my son Charles——”

“ Oh ! say no more,” cried his friend ;  
“ Charles is the man. I would as soon marry my girl to a country school-master as throw her away upon a fellow, who tho’ he were rich as an emperor, would be more anxious to ascertain the colour of Cleopatra’s eyes, than those of his wife. I detest your antients as they call them ; commend me to those who do as others do. I know no faults in the moderns, for my part ; they may talk of the last age as they please,  
but



but I never desire to see a better than the present."

This important point settled, as the two friends believed, so much to their satisfaction, (for they had not an idea that any obstacles could possibly arise to prevent the accomplishment of their plan) they parted in high good-humour, having first agreed to meet again the next evening to talk the matter over once more, and to appoint a day for introducing the parties concerned to each other in due form. This, and conducting them to St. George's church, they very wisely concluded was all they had now to do. As to any degree of reluctance on the part of Miss Mennill or the gay Charles, it never once entered their head, and if it had 'tis to be presumed such were the old gentlemen's notions of love, and parental authority, they could be at no loss for means to conquer it. The fact is, they had not the most distant idea that a fine girl with so large a fortune could have any objections to a fine young fellow with a for-

tune equal to her own; and on a superficial view of the matter their way of thinking appears to be exceedingly natural; yet I fear some objections will occur in the course of the negociation, which, however unexpected by the two friends, may chance to retard, if not wholly disconcert their measures.

Miss Mennill had at this period just entered her nineteenth year. She lost the best of mothers at an age too young to be sensible of her misfortune, and such it was beyond expression great to her, as her father, tho' by the world esteemed a cheerful good kind of man, was of all others least qualified to superintend the education of a daughter. He had been, and still was, a free liver, a *free thinker* is now so fashionable a character, that I fear, were I to add he was that also, it would, by too many of my readers be included in the list of his good qualities. Some, however, there may be, who before they venture to decide the point, may wish to have an easy and clear definition

definition of the appellation, and to such I answer 'tis a being who *never thinks at all*, but who, with a confident self sufficient air pronounces all religion a *bore*, a phrase which has had its day, but is, I am told, on the point of being discarded. What other will be adopted by the *beau monde* to supply its place, is a secret I am not yet acquainted with; but no doubt they will be fortunate enough to find one *equally expressive*.

She had left school about three years, and from that time had resided chiefly with Lady Sedley, a relation of her mother's; who, having no children of her own, had taken particular pleasure in compleating those accomplishments she had already acquired by the most celebrated masters. Nature had formed her in the highest degree lovely—to describe beauty, can answer no purpose, since 'tis fifty to one if after the most accurate description I can give, the reader will form a just idea; let every person then, who may chance to interest

terest themselves in Miss Mennill's history, suppose her that stile of beauty they most admire; let me, however, add, she had, with a face and person indisputably lovely, the most engaging manners, the most tender, generous heart that ever animated so fair a form, a great share of unaffected vivacity, and so fine an understanding, that to know and not admire her, was a thing impossible. Such was the daughter of Mr. Mennill: he was truly sensible of her worth, and not a little vain of being the father of one so highly accomplished; yet, partial as he was to her, the circumstance already mentioned, made him anxious to have her properly disposed of, that is to say, married to a man of rank and fortune. These were the only qualifications he thought essential to happiness; and in this he certainly is not singular, tho' perhaps a little deceived; at least there was a time when other requisites were deemed necessary; but we have found the art of being happy on less rigid terms. Lady Sedley was at this time, tho' not in her *premier jeunesse*, being near thirty, a charming



charming woman, yet her beauty was her least perfection. She gave her unreluctant hand to Sir James, who she looked upon as the most amiable of men when too young perhaps to be a competent judge of merit; one unfortunate defect at least in his character she was an utter stranger to—a defect, for which I am inclined to think there is no perfect remedy; he had a tincture of jealousy in his disposition, which, in spite of a conduct wholly irreproachable, had occasioned much distress to his lovely wife: she was, however, sensible that mortals had no title to expect felicity in this world, *that a something* there ever must be to prevent it, and this she looked upon as the bar to hers. Conscious of the rectitude of her own heart, she was resigned to her fate, and took every possible means to give as little cause for it as woman could do. Sir James adored her; had he beheld her with more indifference 'tis probable she would have suffered less from that suspicious, that tormenting passion.

The

The family were, at the time this treaty took place between the two friends, at Sir James's seat, near Windsor. Miss Mennill had passed some weeks with them, and pleased herself with the hopes of spending the whole summer with her estimable friend. In the mean time, Sir John and Mr. Mennill had, as agreed upon at their last meeting, spent another evening together at the tavern, had drank a bottle or two extraordinary while arranging their plan, and before they parted had finally settled the whole business.

Before we proceed, it may not be amiss to say a word or two concerning Charles Maynard, for whom his father is thus kindly providing so lovely a companion. Perhaps my readers may have already formed an idea of his character from what has been said in a former page, and probably a very just one; however lest they should have failed in any particular trait, I will just add he was, in every sense of the expression, a modern fine gentleman, a member

ber of all the fashionable clubs, figured occasionally at Newmarket, lounged at the opera, laughed, chatted, and ogled every fine woman he met with, and was of course a prodigious favourite in every gay circle. I had almost forgot to say he was handsome, and I should have been to blame, since, however comprehensive the phrase a modern fine gentleman may be, it certainly does not necessarily include that desirable perfection; but, *with that addition*, who will presume to dispute his being an irresistible creature, or be surpris'd that his father, who in his youth had been formed on the same plan himself, should have pronounced him the finest young fellow in the kingdom? Nothing could be more just than his telling Mr. Mennill the two brothers were in every respect the very reverse of each other, 'twas not in nature to form a greater contrast. Charles, strictly speaking, was endowed with no one good quality, unless a handsome person and libertine principles can be looked upon as such, yet he was universally admired, and esteemed

teemed a lively, pleasant companion; but handsome as the world allowed him to be, it was generally confessed that Edmond was infinitely more so: his person was uncommonly fine, and his face in the most perfect stile of manly beauty. His smiles were irresistibly engaging, his manner easy and unaffected. Sir John, who had scarcely ever looked into a book since he left college had set him down as a mere *pedant*, or book-worm as he called it, because study was his passion. He had read all the best authors, not only in his own language, but in most others; and not merely read them, he had to the utmost improved by them both his heart and head; but as I trust his character will unfold itself more in the course of these memoirs than I can do by my pen, I will add no more, except what I have indeed already said, that he was by no means Sir John's favourite. Charles was every thing in his eyes, and no great wonder since he was exactly what he had been himself when of his age, and what he deeply regretted it was no longer in his power to be.

Having,



Having, as I said above, settled all matters with Mr. Mennill highly to their mutual satisfaction, the latter, in consequence of their plan, wrote the following letter to his daughter.

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER II.

TO MISS MENNILL.

DEAR BELINDA,

I AM sorry to shorten a visit from which you promised yourself so much pleasure. My motives when known will I trust reconcile you to the disappointment. I will send the carriage for you on Tuesday morning: if you can prevail upon Sir James and Lady Sedley to accompany you to town, they cannot doubt my being happy to see them.

Your affectionate father,

EDWARD MENNILL.

“Heavens!”

“Heavens!” cried Miss Mennill, having read the above as she and her friend were chatting together in her dressing room, “what can this unexpected summons mean? surely my father is not ill? no; his motives are it seems to reconcile me to the mortification; nay the latter is wrote by himself—very ill therefore he cannot be.”

“Why thus flurried, my dear girl, said Lady Sedley; I see nothing extraordinary in his wishing to have your company however I may regret the loss of it; your lively imagination is apt now and then to outrun your judgment.”

“Thank you for your compliment,” cried Miss Mennill, smiling, “pray now let me have your ladyship’s sentiments on this perplexing event, for I confess it puzzles me, since I cannot even guess what the business can be?”

“Suppose,”

“ Suppose,” replied Lady Sedley, “ a lover should be in the case ? would not Mr. Mennill be perfectly right in saying his motives would reconcile you to the disappointment ?”

“ That depends upon circumstances,” answered Belinda ; “ and I shrewdly suspect, if he really has a project of that ridiculous nature in his head, we may chance to differ in opinion on the subject. To his sentiments on matrimony I am no stranger, what are mine he has never yet deigned to ask, taking it for granted a daughter has only to obey, to give her hand when ordered to do so, to make her best curtsy, and be thankful. Now I on the contrary—but how ridiculous ! no, no, believe me he is not very provident, nor so great an advocate for that holy state as to give himself any trouble about fettering me. Come, my dear creature, let us say no more about it, for go I must ; so let us have one more delightful ramble before I am driven out of this paradise ; put on your hat, and let us



us set out ; Sir James will perhaps accompany us. Apropos, in my flurry I have civilly forgot to intreat you will if possible comply with my father's request ; do for pity's sake go with me, and then I shall not care fixpence what are his motives."

" That, my dear, you are sensible is out of my power ; or have you forgot that we expect Mr. and Mrs. Cardigan to spend a week with us, and that they are to be here this very day?

" Ah! how horridly provoking!" cried Miss Mennill ; " but for these formal souls you would probably have indulged me. A whole week? why, my dear, creature you will die of the vapours before that period is half over."

" Think then," returned her friend, whether I have not cause to regret your absence, whose charming vivacity would effectually have prevented so fatal a catastrophe."

Sir

Sir James now joined them, and asked if they were inclined to walk, as the morning was so fine.

“ Oh,” cried Belinda, “ I for my part am perfectly inclined to do any thing in the world except the very thing I am ordered to do.”

“ Had I taken the liberty to say as civil a thing of you,” replied Sir James, laughing, “ I should have got into a pretty scrape. Pray may I ask what this order may be that has extorted so honest a confession ?”

“ Saucy as usual,” cried Belinda ; “ there read that eloquent billet-doux, and then tell me if I have not cause for my ill humour.”

“ We have infinitely more cause,” replied Sir James, “ if you mean to comply.”

“ O comply I must, that’s too clear a case ; my good father, though a pretty good  
good

good one, all things considered, is not a man to be jested with. He has a will of his own, so have I: but the misfortune is he has an idea that mine is on no occasion to take the lead. Think of his dragging me to town at this sweet season, after promising you should be honored with my company till you was heartily sick of it—that I think was his flattering expression, was it not, Lady Sedley?"

"Something like it," replied her friend, "though not quite so expressive. Suppose I were to write a line," continued her ladyship, "and let him know we at present feel no alarming symptoms?"

"Ah, you might as well address your epistle to the man of the moon. His decrees are as fixed as those of the Medes and Persians. If I durst, I would say the old gentleman, when he is pleased to take a thing in his head, be it right or be it wrong, and the latter will now and then happen in spite of his fatherly wisdom, he is as obstinate

nate as a certain four legged animal with long ears. But as a dutiful daughter I would not hint at a thing of this nature for the world ; go I positively must, so let me take one sweet ramble before I bid you adieu."

Away they went.

Next morning, Mr. Mennill's carriage was at the door before they had finished their breakfast. Belinda took a reluctant leave of her agreeable friends, promising if possible to return in a few days, and was sooner than she wished for set down at her father's in Portland Place.

" Well, my dear Belinda," said he, smiling, as she entered, " I hope you are not very much displeased at my sending for you from your friend."

" Not very much, my dear Sir," replied she.

" Oh, you confess then you are a little so."

" Yes,



“ Yes, a little I own, the country is at this time so delightful ; but your commands are ever a law to me.”

“ That’s a good girl,” said her father, “ and if you continue to see them in that proper light, I promise to make you one of the happiest girls in England.”

“ Upon my word, Sir,” cried Belinda, “ that will be a noble reward indeed for doing my duty ; but to say truth I think myself nearly so already.

“ Have you no curiosity,” asked Mr. Mennill, “ to know why I have sent for you home ?”

“ Oh ! a *vast deal*,” replied she, “ but misses never *confess* they have any, you know.”

“ Well, since you are more honest than other young ladies,” replied he, smiling,

C

“ I will

“ I will gratify it : I am to have a few friends to dine with me to-morrow, and wanted you to do the honours of the table.”

“ Nay now, my dear Sir, you are certainly joking ; how many good dinners have you given without my company ; how could you be so cruel to fend for me merely to carve a chicken ?”

“ Oh, but you may perhaps while doing that, do something else of more importance.”

“ Oh if I can manage to do one thing at a time as it should be,” cried Miss Mennill, laughing, “ ’tis all you can reasonably expect from so giddy a head as mine is.”

“ Well, well, put on all your smiles and graces, and we shall see.”

“ Oh,” replied Belinda, “ that comes of course if there are any beaux in the question,

question, if your party are all females, 'tis another affair, they may chance to like me as well, if not better, without them."

"Apropos," said Mr. Mennill, "suppose you send a card to your friend, Miss Bamfield, and any other you think proper; for, to tell you the truth, the friends I have invited are all of the other sex, and you may find it more agreeable to add one or two of your own; these matters I leave wholly to your management."

"Very well, Sir," answered she, "I am glad I happened to mention that circumstance; but since you have put the idea of conquest into my head, I must take care to invite none likely to eclipse myself. Miss Bamfield is rather too handsome, however I will take my chance."

Having dispatched her card, she next sat down to write a few lines to Lady Sedley as follows.

## TO LADY SEDLEY.

As sure as fate my father has more in his head than usual. I really begin to fancy your ladyship's conjecture is not totally void of foundation; he received me with the highest good humour, seems in uncommonly high spirits, and in short hinted something about putting on all my smiles and graces, in order to conquer no doubt. Heaven only knows what kind of a being it is he intends I am to try their power upon; but the first peep I get will determine the point with me. Should I not like the creature's appearance, I shall be very sparing of both, no necessity you know to waste those precious treasures. What confirms me in this opinion is, that Wilton, when I called her to give her some orders, simpered, and fidgeted if possible more than



than usual. Whether she is in the secret I know not, tho' 'tis more than probable, for she is a wonderful favourite of my father's, tho' I cannot say she so perfectly answers my ideas of perfection; but there's no accounting for taste. I could to be sure have asked if she knew who the guests were my father had invited; but I saw she wished for nothing better, and on that very account restrained my curiosity. Had I once set her tongue a going, and particularly on such a text, supposing *there is a secret*, it is hard to say when it would have ceased.

After all 'tis possible I may be wholly mistaken; mortified I certainly shall not be; for however desirable a *few lovers* may be, yet I am for chusing them myself, since my good father's ideas on that subject may chance to differ as far from mine as they do in regard to the pert Mrs. Wilson.

Say

Say nothing of all this silly chat to Sir James, as he will have cause to rally me should I be deceived. You shall know all, how, and about it, when the day is over ; indeed I trust when it is I shall be permitted to return. Sure I am if that pleasure is denied, it will be no easy matter to force a smile. Adieu ! my dear friend. My compliments to Sir James, and the *nervous* Mrs. Cardigan. What a joyous piece of still life it is !

Your's ever,

B. MENNILL.

Whether Belinda sat longer at her toilet next morning or not, I cannot with certainty affirm ; but 'tis most certain appearances were not against her ; for never had the

the labours of it produced a happier effect ; she was if possible more lovely that day than ever. Her taste in dress was truly elegant ; a profusion in finery has no aid to beauty ; and she judged wisely. She was of Thomson's opinion,

*" That beauty when unadorn'd, is adorned  
" the most.*

When she entered the drawing room, Mr. Mennill, looking upon her with pleasure, said, " upon my word, Belinda, you are armed at all points for conquest to day. The air of Windsor has given a fine bloom to your complexion, or have you purchased it of Warren ?"

" No, thank heaven," cried she, smiling,  
" I am not yet reduced to that miserable case. Such as it is, 'tis all my own ; and, since the air of Windsor has produced so flattering a change, I trust you will suffer  
me

me to return in a day or two lest I should lose it again in this suffocating town."

"That," replied her father, "will depend upon circumstances. Should you be as anxious to return to-morrow as you are to-day—"

"Nay, my dear Sir, you must think me a most unsteady creature indeed," cried she, "if you suppose I can change my mind so violently in one day."

"And yet I have a strange presentiment that you will do it, Belinda," replied he, with an expressive smile.

What can all this mean, thought Miss Mennill, and began to feel a kind of palpitation.

Whether she would have asked any more questions, I know not, for at that moment  
Miss



Miss Bamfield, and Lady Ann Rochley were announced.

“ Ah! my dear creature,” cried both the ladies in a breath, as they paid their compliments to Belinda, “ how glad I am you are returned to us. What could tempt you to stay so horridly long at Windsor.”

“ Every thing desirable in life,” replied Miss Mennill, “ the company of your fair selves excepted, that indeed was wanting.”

“ Oh! you civil creature,” said Lady Ann; “ yet tho’ wanting, you contrived, it would seem, to do mighty well without us.”

“ Why one cannot, your ladyship knows, have every thing just as one would wish in this silly world of ours.”

Silly world!" cried Miss Bamfield, "I vow I like that epithet of all things; 'tis quite new, tho' ridiculous enough by the by; for I look upon this world as a very sensible, pretty kind of a world as one can reasonably desire."

"For my part," said Lady Ann, "I would never desire a better."

"Oh be under no apprehension," said Mr. Mennill, slyly; "you modern fine ladies have no great chance for it."

"For what? I beseech you," cried her ladyship; "what does he mean, Belinda?"

"Mean," replied he, "why a better world; did you not say you never desired it."

"Heavens! was there ever so horrid an insinuation. Pray now, my good friend,  
what

what have we poor modern fine ladies done that you should thus exclude us from that better world, if there is a better. I suppose you have bespoke it for yourself and a few of your selected friends; and indeed if we are to believe all that's said about it by the over wise ones, you will not find yourselves violently crouded. My aunt, who is a methodist, has I fancy been giving you a lecture."

"Oh I beseech you, tell me," cried Belinda, "what is a methodist; one hears of them perpetually, but I never yet could get a satisfactory definition of them, tho' I really long to have the matter made clear to me."

"Lord don't you know what a methodist is?" said Miss Bamfield.

"No, upon my honor," replied Miss Mennill.

"Oh

“ Oh then you need not be long at a loss, Lady Ann can fully inform you.”

“ Most willingly,” said her ladyship ; “ why you must know they are generally of the poorer sort of folks, tho’ now and then a person of fashion’s head may be turned by them. They preach, and pray, and pretend to be prodigiously pious, would not miss going to church for the world, keep what is called good hours, that is, go soberly to bed when we are getting up, rail against the follies of the world ; and in short are a strange sort of unaccountable beings.”

“ And is that all ?” said Belinda ; “ why I do not find any thing so desperately bad in all this ; I have been taught to look upon them as a set of mad enthusiasts ; by your ladyship’s account I think they are on the contrary a very quiet, rational set of beings, unless you can convince me that preaching, praying, and going to church  
is



is irrational, for this seems to me the only crimes laid to their charge."

"Oh!" cried Lady Ann, "but *that is not all*, they are a queer, formal, humdrum set of wretches; you have no idea how horridly disagreeable they make themselves."

"'Tis a thousand pities," said Miss Mennill, laughing, "for really were it not that you affirm they *do* make themselves disagreeable, I do not see that it is the natural effects of their mode of life; perhaps they appear so only to those who neither preach, pray, nor go to church."

They were now interrupted by the entrance of Sir John Maynard, and his two sons, nor was the subject renewed; they found others infinitely more to their taste. What they were, will best appear by Miss Mennill's

Mennill's letter to her friend, Lady Sedley, which she wrote a day or two after, and which for that reason I now give to my readers.

## CHAPTER III.

TO LADY SEDLEY.

'T IS even so, my dearest friend; your conjectures are perfectly right; 'tis plain my father is determined at all events to get quit of the charge of his daughter, or he would never have formed the idea of giving her to the insignificant, fluttering animal he has, to my infinite mortification, made choice of. I foresee much trouble and vexation from this ill concerted plan. I know him too well to believe he will think *my vote* in the business of any weight, indeed he has pretty clearly told me

me so, as your ladyship shall hear. I told you one glance would decide the matter with me, and I told you truth—my fate I fear is decided. Good heavens! how very unfortunate it is that parents and children so very seldom see things of this important kind in the same point of view; but let me endeavour to be more explicit, that your ladyship may know the reason of my being thus disconcerted.

I was pretty certain from several hints that dropped from my father, that he had a match in view for me, and that I was torn from you, my dear Lady Sedley, on that account; yet I was not let fully into the important secret; oh, that I had, I might then perhaps have been more on my guard, I might at least have done my utmost to keep my eyes from gazing on an object but too amiable for my peace; yet had I been blind, had I been only mistress of the sense of hearing, the very sound of his voice—but let me, as I was saying,  
proceed



proceed methodically. Oh, my dear lady, sure no creature was ever so mortified, so wretchedly disappointed as your poor Belinda.

Lady Ann Rochley, and Miss Bamfield, were of our dinner party ; you know them both ; fine ladies. Who the beaux were to be I was not to be informed till their arrival. That moment came at last, and I will honestly confess found me not a little flurried ; 'twas ridiculous no doubt, but the idea of what might be the consequence put it out of my power to be perfectly indifferent. The ladies had been with us some little time chatting about trifles as usual, when the drawing room door opened, and a servant announced Sir John Maynard and his two sons ; which of the three, thought I, is to be the hero of the day ; the father I'll lay my life. This idea soon gave place to others more interesting ; they were introduced in form, by which means I found the object whose first appearance,  
even

even before he had opened his lips, had struck me as the most elegant creature I had ever beheld, was the youngest son; a bad omen, I fear, thought I; for if my father really has any views of this kind, he knows the world too well not to find more charms in the heir than in a younger brother tho' he was endowed with all the virtues that ever adorned human nature.

In this state of uncertainty was I obliged to pass the day; nothing *particular* was said by either of the old gentlemen; but Mr. Maynard, who looks upon himself as an irresistible being, paid me so many high flown compliments, said so many insipid silly things with a view to persuade me I had made a conquest of his insignificant heart, that I was fully convinced of the direct contrary, and that he not only beheld me with perfect indifference, but was utterly incapable of being in love with any mortal except himself. The amiable, the elegant

gant Edmond—oh, Lady Sedley! what a contrast!—*he*, without any such intention I fear, made so deep an impression on mine, that I am persuaded no time, no power on earth, will ever be able to efface it. Think then what a situation I am in; what have I to look forward to but misery?

Excuse my being more particular. I have forgot every thing that passed that fatal day, except that on it I lost my heart.

Next morning at breakfast—"Well, Belinda," said my father, "how do you like the new friends I introduced to you yesterday?"

"As your's, Sir," replied I, "they must ever be agreeable to me."

"Very civilly answered," said he; but not quite so explicit as I wished. Would you now, my dear, persuade me you could  
spend

spend a whole day with two such handsome young fellows as the Maynards, and only find them agreeable on *my* account ; come, come, be honest for once ; and tell me freely what you think of them."

" Why would you, my dear Sir, wish your daughter to fall in love then with every handsome man she may happen to spend a day with ?

" Not absolutely every one, Belinda ; that would rather be a troublesome piece of business ; but I suppose you do mean to fall in love, as you call it, one day or other with somebody."

" Not till somebody falls in love with me, Sir, if you please ; Misses ought not to be quite so forward, you know."

" So you beheld them both with perfect indifference then," said he, smiling.  
" 'Tis a pity, daughter, for one of them  
I promise



I promise you did not easily escape from the power of your charms."

The flatterer *Hope* now whispered in my ear, perhaps 'tis Edmond; my father is rich; who knows but charmed by his worth he may overlook his want of fortune and prefer his daughter's happiness to wealth. This delightful thought darted across my mind while he spoke, and for a moment gave me unspeakable felicity Ah! Lady Sedley! it was but for one poor moment.

"And pray Sir," said I, "on which of your young friends have I had the honour to work this miracle?"

"No great miracle neither, Belinda; but humility is an amiable virtue, and so let it pass. First tell me, however, on which would you have wished to have wrought it had you had your choice?"

"O on

“ O on the youngest out of pure charity,” replied I, endeavouring to put on an air of cheerful indifference ; you see humility is not the only virtue I possess ; no fear of the eldest wanting admirers, his title and estate will secure that point, while poor Edmond’s good qualities, with neither, may chance to be overlooked unless he meets with some generous spirited fair one like myself.”

“ He is prodigiously obliged to your generosity I must confess,” said my father rather gravely, “ but as I am not of quite so charitable a disposition I do not find myself at all inclined to second your very pious purpose ; but make yourself easy, Edmond, though not the man of *my* choice, and of course not of *your’s*, is not in a situation to require so great a sacrifice ; he has a good estate of his own independent of his father, so you see you need not give him the preference *merely* because *you* fancied it would be a meritorious action. But we  
have

have trifled long enough, Belinda, and I will now inform you that the elder is the man I have made choice of for a son, and expect you will from this day forward look upon him as the man who is to be your husband. I trust you will do me the justice to acknowledge I have made such a choice as you can have no objections to. He is young, handsome, well bred, and heir to his father's title and estate; a list of good qualities which I think may satisfy the ambition of any girl in England. Let me see proofs of your gratitude in the ready obedience you pay to my wishes. Sir John, I give you my word, is no less pleased with *you* than I am with his *son*, and since this is the case there is no occasion for fruitless delays. All matters in regard to settlements we have already arranged, so nothing remains for you to do, my dear girl, but to send for your milliner, mantua-maker, &c. that you may as soon as possible be the happiest of wives, as I shall in that case be of fathers."

"Surely

“ Surely you are not serious, my dear Sir,” said I; “ can you suppose I am able on so very short an acquaintance to know enough of Mr. Maynard’s disposition to decide a point of such infinite importance ?”

“ No certainly,” replied he; “ I should be most unreasonable indeed were I to suppose any such matter; and what is more, I do not think you or any girl of your age a proper judge of those affairs, had you been acquainted with him from your infancy; and I have very wisely on that account saved you the trouble of deciding; for which take my word for it a day will come on which you will be sensible I have acted as all prudent fathers who have a real regard for their children’s happiness ought to do, whatever you may with true feminine perverseness think at present. Be assured ’tis only by age and experience this knowledge can be acquired. To these advantages you are yet a stranger; be thankful



ful then, Belinda, that you have a father who is not only willing but able to decide what is most likely to insure your felicity."

"But my dear Sir," cried I, shocked beyond expression to find him so coolly determined, "I beseech you to hear me one moment with your usual indulgence."

"As many moments as you please, daughter," said he, interrupting me, "provided I am to hear no objections. Spare yourself as well as me that trouble; I know all I have done is for your good; what other view can I have?"

"Oh Sir!"

"None of your *ob!* or *ah's!* I intreat you, Belinda; this is mere perverseness. You confess you are not acquainted with him, how then in the name of common sense can you presume to offer objections?"

D

I know

I know him well; I have told you he is possessed of every requisite to render you the happiest of your silly, obstinate sex. I will not suppose you quite so impertinent as to deny me to judge."

"I am very far from being so impertinent, my dear Sir," said I, "yet surely, kind and indulgent as I have ever found you, you will not now refuse to hear me patiently."

"I have already told you, Belinda, I am ready to hear you as long as you please; but I have also told you on what condition; and by all this silly stuff it appears to me you are not disposed to observe it. So here let our conversation end for the present; go and prepare whatever you think necessary; spare no expence; my purse shall with pleasure answer all your demands; in point of time you shall not be hurried; in a fortnight or three weeks I should imagine all your finery may be ready; as for more important

important matters, I shall take that trouble upon myself."

So saying, my dear Lady Sedley, he left me to reflect at leisure on this horrid, this cruel and mortifying business. And now, my dear friend, tell me, advise me what I am to do. Marry that conceited insignificant coxcomb I cannot, and never will; how then am I to proceed in order to avoid it? this is a point on which I am utterly at a loss how to decide. I see too plainly my father's heart is set upon the match. Too well do I know his temper; he will not recede from the engagement he has made; and as for the creature destined to torment me, I have no hope, from him, because 'tis plain my fortune is his only inducement for consenting to it. What a wretch must he be! yet his conduct will be applauded by the fathers of both, while I am condemned merely for presuming to fancy it necessary one should at least have some little preference for the man one is to pass

one's life with ; but as I have already said, I will die—yes absolutely die, rather than give either my hand or heart to a being, who, 'tis as clear as the sun, cares no more for me than for any other woman of equal fortune ; how indeed should he ? Yet dying is no very pleasant remedy, my dear Lady Sedley ; however I trust I shall not be driven to that wretched alternative : my father's wrath I expect ; 'tis possible too he may use harsh measures to bring me to his purpose. I must endeavour to bear them the best way I can. Thank heaven, he cannot compel me—we live in a land of liberty. Without my consent the marriage never can take place, and that I never will consent is no less certain. I trust I have a proper idea of a father's authority, not for worlds would I knowingly rebel against it ; but surely, my dear Lady Sedley, it is not quite so unlimited as mine would persuade me, that I have no right to marry without his consent, tho' even to this I think there may be exceptionable cases ; the consent  
of



of a parent *may* be withheld from mere caprice, from absolute tyranny; there are not wanting instances of it; would a son or daughter under such circumstances be blameable for daring to disobey? surely not; an improper match I trust I never shall make, but no power on earth shall ever persuade me to marry a man for whom I do not at least feel some degree of partiality. But this Maynard! heaven defend me from ever being the wife of such an insignificant coxcomb! You may perhaps, my dear Lady Sedley, tell me I have too hastily formed an idea of his disposition: indeed I have not; 'tis wrote in legible characters in his every look and action. Amiable and engaging as his brother appears, I would not decidedly pronounce him deserving all I think of him, as I have done of the other; *I may be deceived*, though I think I am not; but as to the conceited wretch, born I fear to be my torment, I am positively certain I do him no injustice.

Adieu,

Adieu, my dearest friend; may you ever enjoy all the happiness you so justly merit. My compliments to Sir James.

Your's,

BELINDA MENNILL."

When Sir John made the appointment to dine with his friend, Edmond was not in town, but hoping to arrive the night before; his father, elate with the prospect of so fine a match for his favourite, after telling him of it, and saying every thing was finally settled, he desired he would take that opportunity to pay his respects to his sister elect. To this proposal he made no objections, and very cordially wished his brother joy on his approaching felicity.

Thank

“ Thank you,” replied Charles, for your good wishes. What portion of felicity may be allotted me I know not, but happy are they you know, Edmond, who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed. Matrimony I look upon to be a bitter pill at best, but [*in a half whisper,*] as my finances are a little deranged at present, the damsel’s fortune at least will be a convenient circumstance, however inconvenient I find it to be fettered to herself. But thanks to our kind stars we have found means to abolish the old fashioned idea of “ ’till death do us part;” that was too bad. In those days a man must have been confoundedly fond of shackles before he could resolve to put them on, on such cursedly ridiculous terms, were the woman an angel.”

“ Upon my word,” cried Edmond, I never heard a more lover-like speech. If the lady’s sentiments on the subject are equally modern, I think you bid fair to be

as happy a pair as can be desired. Pray, if I may ask, what kind of a being is this Miss Mennill, who is to have the enviable felicity of calling you lord and master?"

"What kind of being?" replied Charles;  
"O the Lord above and my provident father alone knows, for faith I never once thought of asking the question, though it was natural enough too. He told me her father and himself had made the bargain, that she was to have thirty thousand *down on the nail*, and as much more at the old fellow's death."

"You astonish me!" cried Edmond.  
"Is it possible matters have actually gone so far, and you have not seen the lady?"

"Possible!" replied his brother; "why what is there extraordinary in that? She is a woman I suppose, and for a wife I would not give sixpence for the liberty to choose



choose from the whole sex. Take my word for it, my sober brother, that once married they are all alike."

"Yet you modern beaux, Charles, find charms now and then in the wives of your friends. How is this to be accounted for on your principles?"

"Oh that is quite another affair"—answered Charles; another man's wife may have more charms in my eyes than she had while single. I could give you a thousand excellent reasons for this; but you are such a queer, sentimental, insensible fellow, that I doubt whether they would appear satisfactory."

"Why to tell you the truth," replied Edmond, "I have my doubts on the subject. With these very refined notions," continued he, "I suppose you would think it a mark of vulgarity to blame a man who might chance to discover charms in your's?"

“ Oh ! the greatest *bore* in nature !” cried he ; “ that kind of polite intercourse is perfectly understood among people of a certain rank. But for this, matrimony would be the very d—l.”

“ Well, Charles,” said Edmond, smiling, “ if you are not at least tolerably easy in that state, I must do you the justice to say ’twill be no fault of your’s ; so you really would persuade me you do not care sixpence whether she is young, handsome, old or ugly.”

“ Not a doit, by Jupiter,” cried the bridegroom ; “ if the latter, you know, Edmond, I may chance to have the *singular* satisfaction of having her all to myself.”

It may not be amiss to observe to my readers, that Sir John was not present at this conversation between his sons, tho’ I believe I may venture to add, if he had, it would

would only have served to confirm him in the opinion that Charles was beyond all dispute a compleat fine gentleman—a character for which he had the highest veneration.

The hour of the important visit being arrived, they, as we have already said, made their appearance at Mr. Mennill's. What impression her guests made upon Miss Mennill, we have already mentioned; what effects her charms produced on them, remains to be told.

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER IV.

**W**HAT idea Charles had formed of her, or whether he had given himself the trouble to form any, is uncertain; but 'tis most certain he no sooner beheld her than his heart confessed her the most striking object he had yet met with. He gazed on her with rapture, and most fervently wished to call her his own on any terms except matrimony. All lovely as she appeared to him, her beauty had not power to conquer his



his aversion to that gothic institution; yet before the visit was at an end, he found she had taken such hold of his heart, that sensible there were no hopes of obtaining her on more fashionable terms, he with less reluctance than he believed possible, determined to submit to his fate with a good grace; nor could any lover be more truly impatient for the happy day, on which he was to be put in possession of so inestimable a prize, than he now was.

Miss Mennill was therefore greatly mistaken in fancying he beheld her with indifference; no man could be more sensible of her attractions; but many I trust would have been able to convince her of it in a more delicate, a more engaging manner; he had till now been but little accustomed to the company of virtuous women, nor was he I fear perfectly convinced that any such existed; neither will I venture to say the passion he now felt for the lovely Belinda, deserved the name of love. Be that as it

it will, it was of a nature to make him determine not only to possess her fortune, for which he had great occasion, but also her person, which having now seen, he was tempted to fancy the latter *nearly* as necessary to his happiness as the former; tho' 'till he beheld Miss Mennill, he had made few distinctions, one fair female being in his estimation just as desirable as another.

Such was the state of *his* mind after this important interview; that of his brother was in some respects similar to it: he went to Mr. Mennill's fully persuaded that his daughter was irrevocably engaged to Charles. Sir John, from what motives is uncertain, had taken every means to convince him it was really so; perhaps, as he could not decently decline asking Edmond to be of the party, and conscious that he was not an object likely to be seen by any young lady whose heart was not prepossessed in favour of another with indifference, he might assert it more strongly, to prevent as far as possible

possible any attempts on his side to render himself agreeable to her ; for in spite of his great and unjustifiable partiality for Charles. he could not but know it was amply in his power to prove himself a very formidable rival. Thus firmly persuaded every thing was settled for his brother's marriage, he accompanied them with no other view than as his father said, to pay his respects to a lady who was so soon to become one of the family. His first reflection on being informed of it was, that he thought it no great proof of his father's attention to him that he had not been acquainted with an event of that interesting nature: nay he very justly concluded had he not by accident come to town as he did, 'twas more than probable he might have known nothing of the matter till it was over. However, on finding Charles had not even at that time seen her himself, he without any great effort reconciled himself to this apparent neglect.

His



His idea of Miss Mennill was such as to prevent any feelings of envy at his brother's good fortune had he been capable of entertaining so malignant a passion; he concluded she must be absolutely void of every pretension to that delicacy so essentially necessary to complete the character of an amiable woman, since she could thus consent to give her hand, as he believed she had done, to a man she had never seen: 'twas evidently a match of interest, and convenience on all sides. Not indeed *singular* on that account in these days, but so utterly contrary to his notions of propriety, or possibility of happiness, that tho' he was determined to pay her, when she became his sister, a proper respect as such, he was perfectly convinced to esteem her would be out of his power. Thus prepossessed he entered Mr. Mennill's drawing room; but had not been there many minutes before a strange revolution had taken place in his mind; he beheld her lovely beyond any idea he had yet formed of feminine beauty; he



he gazed on her with delight, but sighed to think so much sweetness, such uncommon grace and elegance, should be thrown away upon a mind so depraved, so destitute of tenderness, and all the finer feelings of the heart. Again he fixed his enquiring eyes upon her, and again he sighed. Her behaviour through the day puzzled him; he made not a doubt, but she knew Charles was the man to whom she was to give her hand; he had been assured every thing was settled, of course her consent obtained. He was curious to see how a young lady would receive a first visit from her lover *thus* circumstanced. Her manner utterly astonished him. No embarrassment, no appearance of emotion when he was presented to her; she paid even less attention to his brother than to any other of the company; she seemed to study only how to render herself agreeable to all her guests, and succeeded to the utmost degree.

What

What could he think, but that amiable and captivatingly lovely as she appeared, she was wholly destitute of sensibility. His brother's bold and confident manner was in his opinion more likely to disgust than please a woman of sentiment ; yet nothing of this appeared in her conduct towards him. 'Tis true, he observed no symptoms of pleasure in her countenance when he addressed her ; she listened to the compliments he every moment paid her with apparent indifference ; indeed had Edmond had the smallest spark of vanity in his composition, he could not but have seen that the few words addressed to her by himself seemed to give her more satisfaction than all his brother's florid speeches. But as I have already observed, he came prepossessed ; all he saw served only to confound his judgment ; he could make nothing of it ; the whole was a scene so new, so foreign to his ideas, that he endeavoured to look upon it with an eye of indifference, as a matter in which he had very little or no concern.

concern. Yet this he found impossible, in spite of all the defects he was compelled from appearances to ascribe to her; her charms—her engaging manners had made so deep an impression on his heart, that all the fortitude he was master of could not preserve him from the irresistible power of her attractions. He condemned himself for his feelings on every account: was she not, he thought, irrevocably engaged to his brother; and had he not a thousand reasons to believe her unworthy the attachment of a man of worth. With reflections of this nature he took his leave. In the moment of parting he felt a rising sigh, and his eyes with reluctance turned from an object too lovely for his peace.

“ Well Edmond,” said Sir John, as soon as they were seated in his carriage, “ what say you to the sister we are going to give you ?”

“ She

“She is a lovely woman,” replied Edmond, glad that the darkness of the night prevented their observing the emotions this unexpected question gave rise to in his breast.

“Why what an inanimate being art thou!” cried Charles, “thus with the cool composure of a stoic merely to pronounce her lovely. By heavens she is an angel! She has more beauty, more attractions in one glance of her bewitching eye than all the rest of her enchanting sex put together!”

“Well done, Charles!” said Sir John; that is talking like a lover; and 'tis such spirited fellows as you only who deserve to possess so much beauty: it would be thrown away upon such a cold-hearted philosopher as Edmond. I'll be sworn he does not at this moment know the colour of them.”

“It



“ It might have been attended with danger perhaps, cold as I am,” replied Edmond, “ had I too minutely examined them. See the effect it has produced on my brother: he I suppose for the future will be blind to the charms of every mortal woman, having thus by *chance*, found an angel.”

“ Oh I understand your *sly by chance*, my good brother,” cried Charles. “Tis thus, you see, that sons are rewarded who pay a proper regard to the judgment of their fathers. *You*, I suppose will think it necessary to look out for yourself; but you’ll have devilish good luck if with all your methodical old fashioned notions you stumble upon such another: for O!” continued he,

“ *She is more than painting can express,  
Or youthful poets fancy when they love !*”

if

if ever they *do love*, by the bye, which I very much doubt ; for you, Edmond, are a poet I think, and can *write* upon the subject to a miracle, but to *feel* as I do the unspeakable delight of loving and being beloved by so adorable a creature—no, no, that is utterly out of your sober line. But my good sir,” cried he, turning to Sir John, “when shall I be put in possession of my divinity?—when shall I have the joy to call the dear creature mine? Edmond, you’ll have the civility to go with us to St. George’s? you have no objections, I trust, to go to church for once in a way to witness a brother’s felicity ; though ’tis a cursed *bore* after all ; but no matter, a fine girl, and thirty thousand pounds, my boy, will make the pill, bitter as it is, go down as glibly as a glass of jelly.”

“Why,” replied Sir John, highly delighted with his son’s rapturous exclamations and lively fallies, “if your mistress

is but half as impatient as yourself, I see no occasion for fruitless delays ; that is all that's wanting ; her father and I have taken care to settle all other matters perfectly to our satisfaction. So *you* have only now to prevail upon her to name her day."

" O as to her impatience," answered Charles, " that we must take for granted. 'Tis a circumstance the dear creatures are rather shy of confessing, you know ; but let me alone, I understand every turn of their eye to a tittle, and if I do not mistake, my fair one will not be very cruel."

At this moment the carriage stopped at Sir John's door, and they soon after parted for the night—Charles, to dream of joys he was not so soon to taste as he fondly imagined ; and Edmond, to regret that so much beauty and sweetness should be thrown away on hearts so insensible as her's and his brother's. In vain he endeavoured to compose himself to rest : the lovely Belinda's

linda's image would in spite of all his efforts to think of her, not only with indifference, but as the woman destined to be the wife of his brother, still keep possession of his thoughts. At some moments he wished to persuade himself, however she might hitherto have acquiesced in the will of her father, and have consented to see the man of his choice, yet it was possible, having now seen him, she might not approve: if she was the kind of woman her countenance, her manner, and every word she uttered, spoke her to be, she could not, it was utterly impossible she *could approve*. "True," thought poor Edmond, "she knows not Charles's character so well as I do. He is handsome; he has all the coxcomical airs and graces of a modern fine gentleman; and how very few females in these our days of folly and dissipation look for more." He now could not forbear execrating the fashionable mode of education; firmly persuaded but for that unfortunate system the too charming Belinda must have been



been no less lovely in mind than person.

After passing an almost sleepless night in these kind of distressing reflections, he rose the next morning determined to forget her ; convinced it was madness to indulge a passion from which, were he even assured beyond a doubt he had mistaken her character, and that she was all his heart could wish, must, as things were circumstanced, be productive of misery. His principal business in town was to settle some affair relative to the estate left him by his uncle ; and to see his father, whom he had not seen for some time, having been engaged in arranging matters at his house in the country which belonged to the estate, and where indeed he had chiefly resided, having from his infancy been a favourite with his generous friend and relation. He meant, indeed, to have spent a few days in London ; but the events of the last had produced such a revolution in his heart,

E

that

that he felt it absolutely necessary to his peace to fly from temptation. He hoped the wound was not so deep but absence, and a change of scene, would effect his cure. Myrtle Grove, the name given by his uncle to his seat, from the circumstance of his being particularly fond of that elegant exotic, and having bestowed unwearied pains in the cultivation of it, justly deserved the appellation, since it was confessed by all who were acquainted with it to be one of the most romantic and beautiful situations in England. A profusion of wood and water, both suffered to take their natural course, rendered it a most desirable retreat. Here it was that Edmond resolved to conquer a growing passion, from the indulgence of which he could promise himself no possible happiness.

In the morning he made a pretence of business to his father and the enraptured Charles for leaving them so soon, but hoped to receive a summons to attend the latter  
to

to St. George's before it was long. This was promised, though perhaps no more intended than Edmond intended to accept the invitation. Having with no great appetite got over the ceremony of the breakfast table, he ordered his post chaise, and wishing his brother every possible felicity, he set off for his seat in the country.

Charles, impatient for the hour in which he could with propriety pay a second visit to his fair enslaver, went to his toilet, and having decorated his person *au dernier gout*, set off for Portland Place, where he had the good fortune to find Miss Mennill alone.

With a confident air without a doubt of success he entered the room—"Ah," cried he, approaching to take her hand, "by heavens, my charming Miss Mennill, I find you more lovely, more irresistible this morning if possible than when I had last the honor of paying my devoirs: What a bloom

bloom—what eyes, and this dear snowy hand too,”—attempting to seize it—“ how divine! Tell me, my enchanting creature, when shall I have the supreme felicity of calling it mine?”

Astonished, and disgusted to the last degree by his impertinent familiarity, Belinda drew back.

“ Upon my word, Mr. Maynard, I am so total a stranger to all this modish jargon,” said she, with a look that had he not been dead to every feeling of delicacy must have petrified him, “ that I really have not the honor to comprehend one syllable of it.”

“ Not comprehend,” cried he, again making an attempt on her withheld hand; “ how, my dear creature! with that angelic countenance can you affect this cruel coldness? Surely you cannot but know I adore you, that your charms have done what



what the charms of your whole sex have hitherto been unable to do, you have made me your willing slave, you have reconciled, nay have made me impatient to enter into a state, which, until I beheld your all-conquering *beauty*, I looked upon as the greatest *bore* in nature, Judge then of the fervor of my passion. and the power of your charms by the miracle it has wrought."

Then falling on his knees at her feet, while she with the utmost difficulty could keep her gravity, tho' horridly vexed to find herself subjected to hear such a string of unmeaning nonsense, he implored her to put an end to his torment by naming an early day to make him the happiest of men.

"Really, Mr. Maynard," replied Miss Mennill, you ascribe infinitely more power to me than I have any pretensions to; what the torments may be, which you mention, I know not; severe they cannot be, I think I  
may

may venture to declare, since I never yet saw a gentleman more at his ease ; and as for naming a day in order to make you happy, surely 'tis of all possible things the least necessary, since a man so perfectly satisfied with himself cannot be otherwise."

" Oh spare me, spare me, my dear Miss Mennill," cried he, rising from his humble posture, finding she seemed mighty indifferent whether he knelt or not ; " there wanted not this display of your wit and charming vivacity to complete your conquest. Even before I beheld your matchless perfections, I felt that my future peace depended on your smiles."

" This, I must confess," replied Belinda, " is going one step at least beyond the common run of compliments, and it would be ungenerous to pass it by unnoticed ; to *fall in love* without seeing the object of your passion was a stroke reserved for you alone ; pray may I ask how the symptoms

symptoms first shewed themselves, or shall I attempt to guess; you heard I presume, Mr. Maynard, that my father *could*, should you be so fortunate as to make him inclined, give me a more than barely tolerable fortune. This naturally led you to believe I possessed every perfection necessary to render the married state, if not compleatly happy according to the old exploded idea of happiness, at least perfectly so, according to that of the present age; and you, like a very prudent, a very sensible young man, instantly *fell in love*. All I have to lament is, Mr. Maynard, that, however highly exaggerated the accounts I have heard of your perfections may have been, they did not by some unlucky means or other produce the same effects on me; I own 'tis a pity, a very great pity, but what can a poor girl do in these cases?"

Charles bit his lips, and looked rather foolish, not exactly knowing whether to laugh or cry as the saying is, when just at  
that

that critical moment the door opened, and in came Mr. Mennill. What a relief! With such a second he did not fear to renew the attack; nay he began to believe the share Belinda had in the above dialogue was uttered with no other view than really and truly to give him a specimen of her talents for agreeable raillery; self love preserved him from the mortification of fancying it possible she could resist his attractions for any considerable time, supposing, as she said, she had not yet fallen in love with them, of the truth of which he had his doubts, for his glass had that morning assured him Charles Maynard was by no means the kind of being to be looked upon with indifference.

“ Well, Mr. Maynard,” said her father as he entered; “ what says my daughter? is every thing settled between you? have you taken the measure of her finger; ha! I am for dispatching business out of hand; life is too short, and time too precious, to be  
be



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"Your daughter," replied Charles, "is an angel; her wit, her charming vivacity has completed the conquest, her beauty began. It only remains with you, my dear Sir, to name the day on which I am to be made the happiest of men."

"Pray, Mr. Maynard," cried Belinda, alarmed at this proof of his confidence, and terrified lest her father should really imagine she had given him encouragement, "permit me to speak *my* sentiments as freely as you have spoken yours. Forgive me, my dear Sir," turning to Mr. Mennill, "if I take the liberty to say Mr. Maynard has grossly deceived himself if he fancies from any thing I have said, since I have had the honor of his company, he is authorised to draw such a conclusion. I am an utter stranger to him. Till yesterday I never had

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honor of seeing him: *he may* have all the good qualities that ever man possessed; but surely I can be no judge whether he really does possess them; indeed were I to draw any conclusion from what I have seen of him this morning, it would be such  
——”

“As it ought,” cried her father, interrupting her with no very pleasant accent. “I have already told you, daughter, I do not expect, nay I will not give you the trouble to form any judgment on the subject. Suffice it to say, this gentleman has done you the honor to ask your hand, I have, on mature reflection, found it such a request as I think you *ought to comply* with; but as girls do not always know what is most likely to be productive of their own happiness, *I take upon myself to say you shall*; so no more of your silly objections; make up your mind therefore to insure your future felicity with a good grace, Belinda, and let me have no trifling. Mr. Maynard,”



nard," continued he, taking his daughter's hand, and giving it to him, " receive this as your own, depend upon it, it shall be such in a few days."

Charles bent his knee, and putting her hand to his lips, declared he had by the precious gift of so inestimable a blessing, made him the happiest of mortals. Belinda, shocked beyond expression to find her father capable of such tyranny, was so wholly overcome by it, that she burst into tears in spite of all her efforts to restrain them; her spirits were quite exhausted; for though sensible he had formed the design of making this detested match, yet she had no idea he would thus cruelly attempt to force her inclinations. How then must she be surprised and distressed on hearing his promise thus given even in her presence! Observing her tears, he flew into a rage of passion, and in spite of Charles's attempts to calm the tempest his trembling daughter had innocently raised in his bosom, he  
sternly

sternly ordered her to leave the room, nor presume to appear in his presence again till she had learnt what was due to the authority of a parent.

Most gladly she obeyed; and flinging herself on a chair as soon as she reached her own apartment, she blamed herself for her ridiculous behaviour, and wished the mortifying scene was yet to begin, that she might convince them she was not the tame, ignorant, timid being they no doubt now believed her, which would persuade them they had only to intimidate, in order to bring her to their purpose. If this was their opinion, she was determined they should find themselves exceedingly deceived—for if she conceived no very favourable impression of him the first time she saw him, we may easily guess the second interview did not set his merits in a more pleasing point of view. She now looked upon him not merely as a conceited coxcomb, but as a most despicable wretch, who for the sake of interest  
would

would not scruple to marry his great grandmother were it not fortunately forbid ; that no power on earth should compel her to marry him, she positively, and no less positively, and freely did she determine to tell her father so when next they met. She had no sooner left the room than Charles poured forth a profusion of grateful acknowledgments for the honor and happiness Mr. Mennill had so generously promised him, swearing it should be the future study of his life to prove he was not wholly unworthy the partiality he now entertained for him. He now expressed some apprehensions lest Miss Mennill's affections should be engaged to some more fortunate man than himself, as she had not received her father's commands in regard to him in quite so flattering a manner as he had presumed to hope she would.

“ All trick, all female perverseness,” cried Mr. Mennill ; “ I know the sex better than you do, young man ; did you then  
expect



expect she was to fly into your arms at first bidding? had I indeed *forbid* her to do it, 'tis hard to say what might have happened; but make yourself easy, you have my promise she shall be yours, and that too before 'tis long. I will let her know who is master here; she has filled her head with romances, and thinks it necessary I suppose, in order to become the heroine of one herself, to rebel against the will of her father; this comes of encouraging circulating libraries; but I'll take care she shall be concerned in no very extraordinary adventures; her's at least shall begin with matrimony, where others generally leave off, so Mr. Maynard, you may depend on her being ready to accompany you to church in less than a week, willing or unwilling."

With this flattering promise, Charles now took his leave, after asking permission to wait upon him again the next day, when



when he hoped, by his obliging endeavours, to find his charming daughter disposed to give him a more favourable reception.

CHAP.

## CHAPTER V.

**H**E was no sooner gone than Mr. Men-  
nill rung the bell, and ordered a servant to  
send Wilson to him immediately. She,  
on entering the room, instantly perceived  
her master was in no very placid humour,  
and therefore composed her features accord-  
ingly.

“Come hither, Wilson,” said he,  
“and tell me honestly whether to your  
knowledge

knowledge my daughter has had the presumption to form an attachment without my consent? has she given encouragement to any of the fellows she has hitherto met with, I mean?"

"Lord, Sir," replied Wilson, "how should I possibly know? I am not honored with Miss Mennill's confidence I'm sure, and scorn to pry into the secrets of any body."

"I desire," said her master, "you will scorn it no longer. You have now my orders for being a little more inquisitive; no very hard or disagreeable task for a female."

"*Thank you, Sir,*" said Wilson, 'with a curtsy, and one of her arch looks, the force of which she well knew.

"Look

“ Look ye, Wilfon,” continued he, “ I have a match in view for my daughter, nay more than in view, for every thing is settled ; ’tis such as she can have no *reasonable* objections to ; a fine young fellow, heir to a title and good estate ; yet the perverse baggage has had the assurance to make objections, of course *unreasonable* ones ; now they can only arise from her being prepossessed in favour of another ; but be he who or what he will, I am no less prepossessed against *him*, because my word and promise is given to the man of my choice. What I want you to do is to sift her, to watch her, to observe whether she sends or receives any letters, and above all to persuade her to comply with my will, without compelling me to use means which she may probably deem harsh, for such I certainly shall have recourse to should she dare to persist in her disobedience ; my word shall not be broke merely to gratify her whims ; my honor is too far engaged for that. Do you comprehend me ?” added he.

“ Oh



“ Oh perfectly, Sir,” replied Wilson, smiling, and not a little delighted with her new employment, “ I understand your honour to a tittle; let me alone for seeing as far into a young lady’s mind as any *she* in the three kingdoms.”

“ Very well,” replied Mr. Mennill, “ set about it then without loss of time. Belinda is now in her own apartment, where I have ordered her to remain ’till she is disposed to obey my commands like a dutiful daughter as she ought; I shall dine out to day that she may have the more time for serious reflections; give her to understand that I expect to find her at breakfast to-morrow morning in the disposition I wish.”

“ Having given these directions, and ’tis said, how true I know not, also a *chaste* salute to the smirking Mrs. Wilson, he took his hat and cane and walked out.

This

This additional proof of his confidence in her, gave her no small pleasure; she had 'tis true, even before this event been conscious of some ambitious ideas.

Masters had ere now raised servants from their humble state. Love was a great leveller; who knows what may happen, thought Wilson, eyeing herself in the glass and adjusting a straggling curl, for all ranks of females now find curls essentially necessary to their happiness, who knows what may happen were Miss Mennill but fairly disposed of?

This idea gave rise to many others no less flattering, and determined her to use her utmost endeavours to forward so desirable an event. Never was mortal so impatient to hear the *bell for church* as she was that of her young lady's: she listened with far more than her usual attention, and when beginning to despair of ever hearing it more, the joyful sound now reached her  
delighted

delighted ear. Up she flew with surprising alacrity.

“ Is your master at home ?” said Belinda, as she leaned on the desk on which she had been writing.

“ No Madam,” said Wilson, “ he is this moment gone out.”

“ Does he dine at home ?”

“ No, Madam.”

“ Oh then 'tis time enough. I meant to have sent this letter to him by you, but tis no matter.”

“ Would you have it sent to him ?” said Wilson, very unwilling to be so soon dismissed.

“ Why, do you then know where to find him ?” cried Belinda.

“ Dear

“ Dear me,” replied the fly housekeeper, “ how could I be so silly ? No, indeed, I quite forgot that circumstance in my hurry to oblige you as far as possible ; tis for my master, is it madam ?”

“ Yes. I thought you understood me before,” answered Miss Mennill.

“ Very true,” said Wilson ; “ all I meant, Madam, was that had it been for any body else I should have been just as ready to take charge of it.”

“ Oh you are vastly kind,” replied her young lady ; “ but I have no other business to trouble you with at present, so you may go.”

Poor Wilson left the room without having had courage to enter on the subject nearest her heart. There was a something in Miss Mennill's manner, tho' ever truly condescending and obliging, that forbade all improper



improper familiarity; yet if any mortal could have conquered this difficulty, it must have been Wilson, who was blessed with as decent a portion of assurance as any person could reasonably desire; it failed her, however, on this occasion, nor could she find any pretence to see her lady again that day. The letter mentioned above was as follows:

“ I have your orders not to appear in your presence, my dear Sir, till I am become sensible what is due to the authority of a parent. Sorry, most truly sorry, am I to find you think I have given you cause to believe me ignorant of it. I hope I am not: and that on cool reflection my dear and ever honored father will do me the justice to believe the reluctance I ventured to shew to a compliance with his will, in an affair on which surely the future happiness  
or

or misery of my life wholly depends, did not, as you unkindly supposed, proceed from perverseness, but from a firm persuasion, that as the wife of Mr. Maynard I must be completely wretched.

“ Ah, Sir! is it possible that prejudice can so far blind you, as to fancy your Belinda could behold, with any degree of preference, so finished a coxcomb, so trifling, so very insignificant a being? All this he is, I will venture to pronounce; and I wish, Sir, you may not one day or other find even these epithets the least exceptionable part of his character.

“ Pardon my presuming to write thus freely of a person so highly favoured by you. As some atonement, permit me now to give you my solemn, my most sacred promise, that if you will so far indulge me as to suffer me to reject Mr. Maynard, I will never on any consideration marry any man who has not your approbation; nay  
on

on that condition I would, did you, my dear Sir, desire it, I would freely promise to live single, since I am fully persuaded that state would be infinitely preferable, infinitely more conducive to my happiness than spending my days with a man I can neither esteem nor love.

“ How far a parent’s authority extends, I presume not to decide; but am perfectly sure, from your past indulgence to your Belinda, I have nothing to fear from it. In this happy persuasion, permit me, my dear Sir, to subscribe myself

your ever truly affectionate

and obedient daughter,

BELINDA MENNILL.

## CHAPTER VII.

**M**ISS Mennill finding there was no chance of having her letter delivered till next morning, as her father very rarely passed his evenings at home, and not being in a disposition either for work, reading, or her harp, on which instrument she was a great proficient, she resumed her seat at desk, and wrote as follows to her friend Lady Sedley :

“ Behold



“ Behold your poor Belinda, my dear Lady Sedley, a prisoner; yes, she is now by the command of her father confined to her apartment till she can bring her mind to look with as favourable an eye upon that conceited puppy Maynard as he does—need I add, my dear friend, if my restoration to freedom is to depend upon that event, ’tis time I were beginning to reconcile myself to my present situation, for never, never, can I quit it on that condition. His first visit made so deep an impression on me, that a second was perfectly unnecessary. I have however been favoured with a second, notwithstanding: O that you, my dear Lady Sedley, had been a witness to the scene! To give you even a faint idea of his impertinence, his conceited familiarity, is impossible; but I will attempt it.

“ The creature came fully persuaded he had only to come, to see, and conquer, and next to do me the honour to ask on what day I would make him the happiest of

men;—only his second visit observe;—yet had he the unparalleled assurance to press for even an early one: I say to give you an idea of it is impossible. Not dreaming that my father could on a further knowledge of such an animal seriously think of encouraging his impertinent hopes, I took the liberty to treat him as he deserved, that is to say with infinite contempt. But this he had not the sense to discover, taking all I said as proofs of my wit and vivacity. Silly soul!

“Is it not cruel, my dear friend, that I should be thus tormented on the account of such a wretch? yet so it is; and by my infatuated father’s harsh proceedings even in this early stage of the horrid business, what may I not expect when he finds I am determined to assert my claim to the liberty of a free-born English woman. I inclose the copy of a few lines I have just wrote to him in hopes of making my peace; how far I shall succeed heaven only knows.  
That

That his temper is obstinate, you, my dear Lady Sedley, know full well, and I now begin to find to my cost that his notions of fatherly authority are carried somewhat farther than I can readily believe justifiable. But will he take my word for that? I fear not, supposing I durst give him a civil hint that I thought so.

“ Do I beseech you, my amiable friend, write and tell me what you would advise me to do should my father really proceed to extremities? I am not fond of playing the heroine, nay I should even dread the thoughts of becoming the town talk; yet how am I to avoid it if I have no alternative but either to give my hand to a creature I absolutely detest, or to follow the example of those unfortunate Misses we read of in the same situations. Bad, very bad as the latter undoubtedly is, yet I fear I must adopt it if the very worst happens. It cannot be said I fly from a rejected to a favoured one. To whom then do I mean to

to fly, your Ladyship I hope will ask? because in that case may I take the liberty to answer—to yourself. Will you, my dear friend, condescend to receive the poor Fugitive should she be compelled to take a step of that desperate nature? if not, I must submit to the fate allotted me; for however great my courage may be, I feel I should not have a sufficient share to set off at a venture.

“ To make this request was the *chief* motive for my writing at present. 'Tis prudent to look forward to what may happen. I beg, my dear Lady Sedley, you will set my agitated heart at rest in regard to this point. When secure of an asylum with you till the storm is blown over, my mind will be more at ease. Your ladyship is at liberty to read this to Sir James. He, I am well assured, will make no objections to any act of kindness his Harriot may propose.

“ Ah!



“ Ah! what an idea must the amiable Edmond have formed of me if he believes I could voluntarily give my hand to a creature so perfectly the reverse of himself? Astonishing! that two brothers should be so totally different! 'tis true I know but little of either, yet too much of one of them for my peace, nay perhaps of both: for I will to you my dear friend confess, the engaging, gentle Edmond's image is deeply imprinted on my imagination at least, if not on my foolish heart. 'Tis astonishing to me that my father, knowing both as he no doubt does, should give the preference to — But I forget the too charming Edmond is not the heir: that is a flaw in his character there is no getting over. I wish I knew what he thought of —

“ But how ridiculous! Adieu, my ever dear Lady Sedley! I would gladly believe I shall not have occasion to put your valued friendship to so severe a test as asking you

to receive a run-away daughter. My affairs I hope will take a more favourable turn. Let me have the pleasure of hearing from you the first leisure hour, and believe me ever

Most truly your's,

B. MENNILL.

Wilson

Wilson, eager to be engaged in a business so fitted to her talents, went next morning earlier than usual to Miss Mennill's apartment to receive orders for the day. The first was, that she would give the letter to her master with Belinda's duty. Gladly would the inquisitive dame have known its contents; but this was out of her power without a breach of trust for which the temptation on this occasion was not sufficient. She took it with an air of the utmost respect, and immediately flew with it to the breakfast parlour, where Mr. Mennill still was.

"A letter for you, Sir," said she.

"For me," said he; "from whom, pray, that *you* should be the bearer?"

"From Miss Mennill," replied Wilson.

He took it; and having cast his eyes over the contents, the sagacious emissary soon perceived it gave him no great satisfaction. He threw it on the table, exclaiming "Sure a man needs be plagued with no greater curse than an obstinate daughter. What would the girl be at? But no matter what she shall never persuade me that some other lover is not at the bottom of all this. By heavens if I knew where to find him I would put an effectual end to his impertinent hopes. But find him or not an end shall be put to them, and that too without farther delay. Here she tells me, by way of showing her humility truly I suppose, that she will not presume to decide how far the authority of a father extends. If she either cannot, or will not, I will make the point perfectly clear to her, that she may depend upon. Don't attempt to deceive me, Wilfon," continued he; "you certainly have it in your power to tell me whether she has an attachment for any other. Let me have no prevarication: tell me plainly, do you, or do you not believe she has?"

Wilfon



Wilson judging it the readiest way to make herself of importance in this affair to pretend a knowledge of her lady's secrets, after an affected pause, and appearance of reluctance to betray them, at last confessed she believed his honour's conjecture was but too well founded. 'Twas she found in vain to attempt deceiving a person so clear sighted as his honour. She had long feared what would be the end of it; she had often and often taken the liberty to hint to her young lady that such underhand doings as a body might say could come to no good. But what signified the advice of a poor faithful servant; young Madam had been shy to her ever since."

"So so," cried Mr. Mennill in a rage; "fine doings indeed! O mighty well, my pretty dear; you would live single truly rather than take the man recommended by your father, would you? Yes, yes, I'll be sworn would you, but no longer than till you could contrive ways and means to get into

into the hands of him you have thought proper to chuse for yourself. But by all that's honest I'll have the start of the fellow be he whom he will. He shall never make a fool of me, whatever he may make of Maynard; let him when she is once his own see to that."

"And is it Mr. Maynard, that handsome, proper gentleman was here yesterday, Miss Belinda talks of with such contempt? Is it him your honour wishes her to marry?"

"Him; why to be sure it is," replied her master; who the devil else should it be?"

"Well," cried she, "I stand amazed! Why as you say, Sir, it must, it can be nothing but downright perverseness and contradiction to be sure. Well, all I have to say is, that if what I have been told is true, the young man she is dying for, as  
one

one may say, is no more to be compared to Mr. Maynard than Sir John is to your honour : for I had a peep at them all as they came out of their carriage the day they dined here. There were two of his sons I think ; pray may I be so bold as to ask which of them was it that your honour is so taken with ?”

“ Which ?” cried Mr. Mennill, a pretty question truly : “ why the eldest to be sure.”

“ Aye certainly,” replied Wilson ; “ one would hardly give such a fortune as Miss Belinda will have to a younger brother. That was the ’squire in blue, was it not, Sir ? never did I set eyes on so sweet a looking gentleman.”

Then you never set your eyes on the other,” said her master, “ or you would not have made so foolish a speech. Blue, indeed—no, the squire, as you call him,  
was

was in scarlet, and as far superior to that sneaking, sober fellow, as a good guinea is to a Birmingham farthing."

Here Mrs. Wilson found herself on the wrong side of the post, but soon recovered that false step by crying, "Lord bless me, 'tis scarlet I mean. Well might your honour call me foolish indeed. I wonder what I was thinking of. The gentleman in blue, though a pretty enough looking young fellow, to be sure was not to compare with the other: no life, no spirit in his appearance. Indeed I said then to John, who let them in, says I—'him in scarlet for my money' when he asked me how I liked our new visitors."

The wily dame now fearing she might get into another blunder, asked by way of changing the discourse, "whether he would have her call Miss Mennill down, or whether his Honour would write her an answer."

This



This question, though a natural one, puzzled him. He paused a few moments, unable readily to determine, but at last bid her send her mistress down.

Belinda, delighted, had not a doubt but her letter had produced the desired effect, little dreaming an enemy had stepped in and added fuel to the flame already kindled in the breast of her father. I need hardly tell my readers this enemy was Wilton, of whose talents for invention they have just had a pretty tolerable specimen. Judge then how she was shocked at the cruel reception she met with on appearing before him.

“ So, so, Madam,” cried he as she entered, ’tis no wonder the man of my choice found no favour in your sight ; you were, I find, in too great an hurry to wait, and had provided one for yourself.” Terrified beyond expression at the fury in his looks, she was going to clear herself from an accusation

culation so perfectly groundless, when he stopped her by insisting upon knowing who the rascal was who had thus taught her to despise his commands. In vain she protested, in vain she wept. He would listen to nothing but a confession of what she was in fact wholly innocent. Having never seen him thus enraged before, all her boasted courage forsook her, and tears were the only answer she had power to give to the questions he asked her.

Not having a doubt of Wilson's veracity, the vile insinuations she had thrown out agreeing but too well with his own conjectures, he now with a thousand oaths swore she should marry Maynard within two days, or go penniless to the scoundrel for whose cursed sake she thus forgot the duty and affection due to her father. So saying, he again sent her weeping to her apartment, repeating as she went his orders that she should prepare herself to attend him to church on Thursday morning,

it

it being then Monday. To describe her feelings at that cruel moment is impossible : all hopes of happiness now were at an end ; for granting she could avoid the threatened, justly dreaded marriage by flight, such were her sentiments that while under the displeasure of a father, happy she never could be. At some moments she was tempted by absolute despair to go down again and give her consent ; no longer caring whether she was wretched or not : but when she called to mind the being to whom she was thus to devote the rest of her days, her heart shrunk with horror from the thought. The amiable Edmond too, though she had no probable chance of ever seeing him more, would also obtrude himself on her imagination.

Thus distressed, and unable to resolve on any thing, she grew painfully impatient for an answer from Lady Sedley. But two days between her and certain misery !

two

two short days ! She hardly knew whether she most wished or dreaded their being over, that she might know her fate :—however dreadful, she thought it could not be more painful than her present suspense.



## CHAPTER VII.

NEXT morning the earnestly wished for letter was brought her by her own maid ; luckily no orders had yet been given to stop them, at least, to any person except Wilson, nor indeed had she received any such explicitly ; yet, 'tis most certain, her officious zeal would have led her to do it, had it fallen in her way. The contents, which were as follow, gave her the first gleam of comfort she had enjoyed since this affair had been in agitation.

“ Your

“ Your letter, my dear Belinda, has exceedingly distressed me ; do not mistake me, and for a moment fancy I am going to reject the flattering offer you have made us of putting yourself under our protection, in case there should be a necessity for your taking such a step ; no my beloved girl, no. Be assured our hearts, as well as house, shall be open to receive so amiable a guest.

Make yourself easy then, my dear girl ; and, if Mr. Mennill’s unaccountable infatuation should really tempt him so far to forget the tenderness so justly due to you, fly to us, instantly fly, and be assured of the kindest reception.

Yet, that I may have nothing to reproach myself with, let me ask you, my love, are you, can you be quite certain that a farther acquaintance with this so highly favoured Maynard, might not reconcile you to him by discovering good qualities which

which you may hitherto have overlooked?

I think I see my Belinda turn up her pretty lip at this matronly interrogation; but having thus done my duty, if your heart answers in the negative, and if you must either take him, or turn heroine, as you call it, pray of two evils let us chuse the least; leaving your father's house to fly to *mine* will surely be as faultless a step as the nature of your situation will admit of. They must be very rigid mortals indeed who would not hold it guiltless: nay I am persuaded, if upon mature reflection, with such a share of understanding and discernment as you are mistress of, you continue to think of him as you did at the moment you wrote the letter now before me, he must be not only unworthy of you, but your father's prejudice will also evaporate on a farther acquaintance with him, and all will again be well.

But

But this is not all I have to say to you, my dear Belinda, and what remains will, I hope, give you pleasure; Sir James is obliged to be in London to-morrow, where he has business which will probably detain him a week or a fortnight. I had not quite determined to accompany him 'till I received your letter, tho' we had talked of it: but I now am, not only that I may be near him, but you also, in case of accidents.

Should you be obliged to escape from tyranny, it will be far easier for you, my dear, to reach Wimpole-street in safety, than Windsor, for I presume you will be obliged to come unattended to either.

Depend then on my being in town a very few hours after this letter; and if I can be of any possible service, you have only to command me; Sir James bids me say the same thing for him, a trouble I believe I might have spared myself, since you know the real regard he has for you.

Adieu!



Adieu! my dear suffering girl! I trust all will yet be well. Will you pardon my forgetting even to mention your favourite Edmond. I will not interrogate you again, Belinda, or I might, you know, ask, on so short an acquaintance, you could contrive to discover such perfections in him.

Because, answers my saucy friend, they were fully as conspicuous as his hvile, impertinent brother's defects.

Farewell!

Your's ever.

HARRIOT SEDLEY.

This

This letter was indeed a cordial to the drooping spirits of poor Belinda, half her troubles at least seemed to vanish as she perused its friendly contents.

Why should I thus distress myself, thought she, why give way to despair? Surely duty cannot demand that I should become a voluntary sacrifice, merely to please the caprice of an unfeeling father—impossible—nor will I—'tis sufficient if I never marry without his consent. This I certainly will never do, at least *I think* I never will. Why then, by what law, human or divine, has my father a right to compel me to marry a man I detest; no, I will fly to my amiable, my generous, kind friends. While under their protection, I need not fear the censure of the world. Thank heaven I have so eligible a resource. Away then with these horrid fears; I will weep no more, but with becoming fortitude await the hour that must decide whether I am or am not to accept their obliging invitation.

With

With her heart more at ease than when she last addressed him, she now again wrote to her father the most submissive letter any reasonable man could possibly desire, promising obedience to all his commands, would he but permit her to reject Mr. Maynard. Wilson was a second time sent down.

“What have we here,” cried he, as she with simpering looks presented it to him : “I trust the young lady has found I am not a man to be trifled with, and is come to a proper way of thinking.”

“I hope so, Sir,” said Wilson ; “I am sure if she is not, she but ill deserves the blessing of so indulgent, so kind a father.”

While she uttered this flattering speech, he was glancing his eye over the paper, but soon found he was disappointed in his expectations. With a look of indignation

G

he

he threw it from him, and bidding her at her peril bring him any more such impertinent scrawls, ordered her to return and tell his daughter she had heard his last, his final determination, and had only to prepare herself accordingly.

Up went the self important Mrs. Wilson, who delivered her message in due form. Belinda, during her absence, had been reflecting in what manner it would be wisest to behave, supposing this letter also failed in its purpose—a little dissimulation appeared to her the best plan she could adopt.

“ Well,” said she, “ all is over then, and I must I find submit to my fate.”

“ That’s a dear good young lady,” cried Wilson, quite delighted to hear matters were likely to take so desirable a turn. “ O how pleased will my master be, how happy will this submission make him, and you



you too, Miss; I am sure, yes perfectly sure, for a finer, handsomer, comelier gentleman than Mr. Maynard I never set eyes on."

"I am glad," replied Miss Mennill, "my determination is likely to give such general satisfaction; you may go," continued she, "I wish to have a little leisure to reflect on the important change that is so soon, so very soon to take place in my situation."

"Aye, no wonder, my dear young lady, no wonder. I have your permission then, have I not, to make my master quite easy?"

"Oh by all means if you can," answered Miss Mennill; "it has ever been my first wish that he should be so."

Wilson, with a triumphant smile on her ruddy countenance, curtsied, and flew to

impart the glad tidings to her master. Their joy was mutual, nor am I certain but they both at that happy moment had an eye to an event not unlikely to happen in consequence of this fortunate revolution.

Miss Mennill was now suffered to dine with her father, and all animosity seemed totally forgotten. He was kind; and she appeared, if not extravagantly happy, tolerably content.

Being fully determined to put herself under Lady Sedley's protection the next morning, her only wish now was that the day might pass without a visit from her impertinent lover; but this was not to be; Mr. Mennill had instantly informed him Belinda's reluctance was vanished, and he hoped to see him that afternoon. He came early—how was she mortified to be thus obliged to hear all his insignificant, unmeaning speeches without a frown, or daring to rally him as she had formerly done!

The

The hours he staid appeared endless. She every moment peeped at her watch—she hinted having letters to write—orders to give—'twas all in vain. He was in raptures now at her knees—now viewing his irresistible person in the glass, swearing he was the happiest of mortals.

The most intolerably conceited you mean, thought Belinda.

At last she complained, and not without truth, of a violent head ach, and begged leave to retire. To this her father consented, but as she left the room, bid her with a smile remember Thursday morning.

Charles on his knees echoed the injunction: and, in spite of her efforts to prevent it, pressed her hand to his lips.

The two gentlemen now talked the matter over by themselves, and having settled every thing for the important hour, they parted for that day.

Mr.

Mr. Mennill, however, met Sir John as usual at the coffee-house, and there in high good humour talked it over once more with him. It was agreed the parties concerned were to meet in Portland Place on Thursday morning, and from thence proceed to church; wedding finery could be procured, they very wisely considered, just as well after the ceremony was over as before, for they had some reason to fear delays might be attended with danger.

Belinda was of the same opinion, and therefore early next morning, having put up a few of her most valuable effects, she, before the prying Mrs. Wilson had opened her sharp eyes, slipped out unperceived by any of the family, and getting into the first chair she met with, was safely conveyed to Sir James Sedley's in Wimpole-street.

So great were her agitations while pressed in the arms of her affectionate friend, that it was not without difficulty she could prevent



prevent her fainting. A glass of water however relieved her.

“Compose yourself, my dear creature,” cried Lady Sedley, leading her to a sofa and seating herself by her; “you are now safe, my love; you have nothing farther to fear. I am sorry things are brought to this extremity; but do not, cannot blame my Belinda, nor will any reasonable, unprejudiced person, I am certain.”

Miss Mennill now told her that the very next morning had been fixed on to make her a wretch for life—she had been compelled to deceive her father by letting him believe she would no longer persist in her disobedience; this she confessed hurt her feelings beyond expression; but what could she do—had she not given hopes of this nature, was it not too probable she might have been so narrowly watched as to have put it out of her power to escape; “and then,” added she, “what must have become of me?”

me? But I tremble lest my father," continued Miss Mennill, "should suspect I am here. What if he should come himself to enquire?"

"You forget, my dear," said Lady Sedley, that he does not know we are in town; and I had the precaution before I left the country, to leave orders with my people, in case any enquiries should be made, to say we were gone to Scarborough; so all we have now to do is to let as few of our friends as we can know we are here."

"How kind, how considerate have you been, my dear friend! I had indeed forgot that circumstance; but do for heaven's sake tell me, do you think my father will be inflexible? do you think he will? surely when convinced, as he must be by the step I have taken, how unconquerable my repugnance was to the wretched match he  
had

had so unfortunately projected, he will forgive and take me again into favour."

"No doubt of it," replied her friend; "I cannot doubt it; but we must have patience, we must give his passion time to subside. This is the first, the only fault he can accuse you of; and I think when he comes to reflect coolly on the subject, he will do you justice, and be sensible 'tis himself not you, that is to blame for what has happened."

Sir James now joined them, and declared he was of his Harriot's opinion. Miss Mennill now began to acquire some degree of composure, and endeavoured to adopt the comforting sentiments of her friends, and being seated at the breakfast table, they laid down the best plan they could think of for keeping themselves concealed, but agreed, should Mr. Mennill discover their being in town, and make any enquiries,

G 3

they

they would evade as far as possible giving him the information he desired.

In this situation let us leave the friendly party, and next see how matters went on in Portland Place.



## CHAPTER VIII.

WILSON had orders from her master to have an elegant breakfast prepared for Thursday morning; his carriage to be ready, &c. He had invited a female friend to accompany his daughter to church, taking that trouble upon himself, pretty well convinced, that though Belinda had given her consent, she was not so delighted with the business as to have any farther hand in it than was absolutely necessary.

Sir

Sir John and the exulting bridegroom promised to be with him early. Poor Edmond was forgot: no invitation, though promised, was sent to him. In fine, the important morning came. Wilson had repeatedly tapped at her lady's door; but finding it locked, contrary to her usual custom, concluded she wished not to be hurried. I forgot to mention that circumstance at the proper moment. Belinda, when she left her apartment, had locked the door and put the key in her pocket: with what view is uncertain; but as in fact it could answer no good purpose, I am inclined to believe she knew not, in the flurry her spirits were then in, that she had done it. After, as I said before, repeated tapping at her door, poor Wilson had nothing for it but to wait till Miss Mennill's bell should ring: for though this was intended as a summons for her own woman, she on that day meant to be no less ready with her attendance than Mrs. Betty.

“ Lord

“ Lord blefs me !” cried the identical Mrs. Betty, who now alfo came up, wondering ſhe had not yet been called for, “ what can my young lady be about ? I have been in the fidgets theſe two hours, longing to be employed in dreſſing her to the beſt advantage.”

“ Nay heaven knows,” replied Wilſon ; “ here have I been waiting and waiting ’till I am weary. Surely ſhe cannot be aſleep till now on ſuch a day as this.”

At that moment the two Abigails, to their utter confuſion, heard a carriage drive to the door.

“ Mercy on us,” cried they both in a breath, “ as ſure as I am a living finner the company are arrived.”

“ Down ran Wilſon to have a peep, and inſtantly returned ſcreaming—“ It was Sir John and his ſon !” All ceremony was  
now

now at an end : they both knocked and called with all their might, but all to no purpose.

“ Lord have mercy on us !” cried the terrified Betty, “ as sure as I live Madam has put an end to her life. I always thought how it would end. What could my master expect better ? He will now, when too late, repent of forcing her inclinations.”

“ O you frighten me out of my very wits !” cried Wilton, a little conscience smitten. “ What shall we do ? how inform her father of this desperate deed—for it must, it must be as you guess ! Alas ! that ever I should live to see this dreadful day !”

At this moment a servant came with orders to Mrs. Betty to hasten her young lady, as breakfast waited.

“ Aye,



“ Aye, and it may wait long enough before my young lady partakes of it,” replied Betty, and sobbing, for she truly loved Miss Mennill. “ A fine hand they have made of it amongst them.”

“ Why, what is the matter ?” said John.

“ Matter !” cried the women both in a breath, “ why Miss Belinda is dead.”

“ Dead !” exclaimed John, staring with affright, and his hair standing an end, “ what in the name of heaven do you mean ?”

“ Mean,” cried Betty, “ why that she has as sure as I stand here alive, hanged herself ; for we have been knocking and banging at the door these two hours, and cannot make her hear.”

“ And which of us three,” said the  
terrified

terrified John, "is to carry this news down to our master? Not I, I promise you."

"Nor I," cried Wilton.

"Nay, nor I," said Betty. "Yet if you both go I dare not remain here I'm sure," looking over her shoulder as she spoke.

"What are you looking at?" cried Wilton, starting, "did you see any thing?"

"I hardly know whether I either see or hear," replied Betty, "for my part. Do let us all go down together."

The parlour bell now rang with violence.

"Mercy on us," cried the trembling group,

group, "what shall we do, what can we say?"

"Say," answered John, why tell the truth to be sure; my master could expect no better."

Down they went in a body without ceremony, each of them pressing the others to go foremost. They had no sooner opened the door of the apartment where the guests were assembled, than Mr. Mennill wondering what so many of them wanted, cried—"where is my daughter?"

"Where," replied Mrs. Wilson, putting her handkerchief to her eyes to hide her want of tears, "in heaven by this time, Sir, I fear."

Up started the whole party; terror and amazement in their looks.

"Mercy on us! what does the woman mean?"

mean?" cried they all in a breath. "Is Miss Mennill dead then?"

"O ladies! O gentlemen!" said Wilson, "'tis too true I fear, for——"

"You fear!" exclaimed her master, in some measure comforted by the words *I fear*, which implied a doubt, "speak instantly in a manner to be understood, woman, nor thus torture me in suspense; how is Belinda?"

Ah Sir, as I said before, I fear she has committed some rash deed, for her door is locked; we have been knocking and screaming at it for these two hours, but can get no answer."

"Merciful heaven! what is it I hear?" said Mr. Mennill, consternation, and grief on his countenance; at the same time going towards the door, all the company following him with inexpressible confusion, the mortified



tified Charles of the number muttering as he went, "by Jupiter this is the greatest *bore* I ever met with, this is carrying the joke too far, I think the alternative was not quite so desperate," stealing a side glance as he passed a large mirror. They reached Miss Mennill's door; it was still locked, her father called her, entreated her to open it, for he could not persuade himself to believe any thing more was the matter than some remains of her former reluctance, which but for a degree of apprehension that the servants conjectures *might be* right, he would have severely condemned, he called and called in vain, his fears, his terrors now again took possession of him; with a voice scarce articulate he ordered the door to be forced open, when to the astonishment of the whole party on entering the room, no Miss Mennill was to be found either dead or alive. They now gazed on each other as if to find an explanation of this mystery. Every closet, every corner was minutely searched; even places where it was utterly impossible

impossible she could be, were not omitted; never sure did a set of well dressed beaux and belles make a more ridiculous appearance than those we are now talking of; but the principal figure in the piece was the poor mortified, crest fallen Charles, *he* looked—but 'tis not in my power to describe *how* he looked, and to compleat his embarrassment, every eye was fixed upon him of course."

"Why, where in the name of heaven" cried the now half distracted Mr. Mennill, "can the headstrong perverse gipsy have concealed herself? here she certainly is not. The whole house now underwent a thorough search; all the servants were strictly questioned; no intelligence, no glimmering of light could be procured, consequently they were obliged to conclude the young lady had fairly given them the slip by running away. 'Twas not a very pleasant circumstance, nor was it by any means flattering to the vanity of Charles, their situation

tion was awkward beyond conception ; for some moments after they returned to the room they had in such confusion quitted, a silence almost totally ensued.

At last, “ this is, it must be confessed, a very foolish piece of business,” said Mr. Mennill. See my friends what it is to be plagued with the charge of a daughter. That she has behaved like a fool there’s no disputing, the case is too clear ; however, my good friend,” addressing himself to Sir John, and endeavouring to set the matter in the fairest light he could, “ will you be kind enough to look upon it merely as a girlish silly trick and still wish to see the affair concluded in the manner you expected it would have been by this time ? I will undertake to promise it shall ; no fear but I shall find the sly and undutiful baggage, and find her too, I’ll be sworn, cured of her folly ; she will not find every house so convenient as she has ever found mine, no, no, take my word for it she will be glad to return

turn before the week is out. What say you, young gentleman, have you a stock of love sufficient to hold out till we recover the fair fugitive, or has this specimen of *her* courage damped *your's* ?”

“Fore ’gad, replied Charles, I am quite petrified with astonishment, I never once conceived, I was the kind of being from whom a lady would run away, the circumstance is I confess new to me; Miss Men-  
nill’s taste I flatter myself is rather singular,” and he cast his eye on *his friend* the mirror who confirmed his assertion, “yet if a stock of love is alone wanting to bring our affairs once more in train, proceed, my dear Sir, with vigour, I am still your man, my courage is not so easily damped, the more difficulty, the more honour, a conquest too easily gained loses half its charms.”

“Bravo,” cried Sir John.

“And



“ And bravo !” echoed Mr. Mennill ;  
 “ spoken like a fellow of spirit, cried he,  
 Belinda shall yet be your’s, taking his  
 hand and giving it a hearty shake, I here  
 swear by all that’s solemn and sacred she  
 shall if in the land of the living, though  
 such a reward is rather more than she has  
 any claim to.”

“ No matter,” said Sir John, “ let us  
 set her an example worthy her imitation ;  
 we all have some faults, some failings ; we  
 must bear and forbear, forget and forgive.”  
 These sentiments met with general ap-  
 plause, and nothing now remained in order  
 to restore all things to peace again, except  
 finding the fair runaway. Much was said  
 by every one in turn concerning the way  
 most likely to succeed, and each one pro-  
 mised to use their best endeavours for this  
 purposed.

Charles swore he would get a search  
 warrant to examine every house in Lon-  
 don,

don, and had not a doubt but his propitious stars would guide him to the object of his adoration ; again he was applauded for his spirited speech, and the party broke up in order that no time might be lost in the business.

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. Mennill was no sooner left to himself than he began to consider where it was most probable his daughter could be. It must, he thought, be at her friend, Lady Sedley's, at least he determined to enquire there first. A servant was instantly dispatched to Windsor. He had so little doubt of her being there that he felt only some

H degree

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H degree

degree of impatience for the messenger's return ; but how was he shocked, surprised, and enraged, on finding when he did return that Sir James and Lady Sedley had set out for Scarborough some days ago ! He was utterly confounded, nor knew what step he was next to take ; all now depended on mere chance ; he had no clue to guide him, not the most distant idea where to enquire next, nor was it by any means a pleasant undertaking to be thus in a manner compelled to expose both himself and his daughter. He was provoked and enraged beyond all expression ; and repeatedly vowed if ever he did discover the place of her retreat she should dearly repent her unpardonable conduct.

“ Yes, by heavens she shall ! ” cried he, as he walked up and down the room in the most violent agitation ; “ all I regret is that my word is given to so fine a young fellow. She but ill deserves so enviable a fate ; were it not that I have promised, that  
my

my honor is solemnly engaged, by all that's good I would marry her to a cobbler who should soundly thrash her bones every day of her life."

Day after day passed on, but no tidings could be heard of her. All their enquiries were fruitless; and in short they were obliged to give up the point, trusting that accident might, when they least expected it, do more for them than they had been able to do for themselves.

Near a month had now passed since the day on which Mr. Mennill flattered himself he should get quit of all his cares, by having his daughter well married. Edmond began to think it rather extraordinary that he heard nothing from either his father or brother about the affair as they had promised he should; he felt a degree of impatience, mixed with a degree of hope of he knew not exactly what; he grew anxious to know how matters went on.

The image of the lovely, but as he believed, the insensible Belinda, haunted his imagination without ceasing. "Perhaps," he would at some moments fancy, "she had after all refused Charles; 'tis most certain, I saw no symptoms of partiality for him in her behaviour. Yet had she not consented to be his—she had—yes, even before she saw him, her word was given. He sighed, and wished to drive her too charming idea from his mind; he tried it, but tried in vain. Determined to know the truth as the only remedy for a passion his reason condemned, he had some thoughts of going once more to town; this he gave up—he would next write to Charles—no, he feared trusting his pen on the subject to him. At last, unable to conquer a curiosity for which he could not account to his own satisfaction, he resolved to write to a friend of his then in London, to whom he could do it, and make what enquiries he pleased without any scruple. They were pretty regular correspondents; indeed he

was



was at that very time wondering he had not lately heard from him. Next morning was set apart for this purpose; but before the day was at an end the following letter was brought him from that very friend.

EDWARD WHARTON, Esq.

TO

EDMOND MAYNARD, Esq.

I know you have for some time, Edmond, been *looking upon*, if not very civilly *calling* me a lazy idle fellow. Appearances I confess are rather against me: but you are not to learn, they are not always to be trusted,  
so

so let that suffice at present : instead of a detail of the whys and wherefores, I have other matters to treat you with more to my taste and your's too I hope.

Pray has Charles, that pink of puppyism, yet sent you a summons to attend his nuptials?—in your last you told me you daily expected it. Lay aside those fruitless expectations, Edmond. Oh I have so joyous a tale to unfold, could I but hope to do it even common justice, as will serve you to laugh at every day of your life, were you to live to the age of Methusalem. The town is ringing with it ; but you have no doubt heard of it ; you must ; and I have of course lost the joy of making you die with laughing. However, upon a supposition that you may not, here goes.

The day of days was fixed—Miss, as the world says, had, during the whole course of the negociation, been rather refractory  
or

or so; but that was got over: the day, as I was telling you, was fixed.

Charles and his father, dressed *a merveille* no doubt, and *bien poudré*, stepped into their carriage elate with hope and all the other pleasant sensations an affair of this nature must naturally give rise to, and drove to the temple of his divinity; two or three other friends were also invited to accompany the happy pair to church; his said divinity had not, it was conjectured, finished the labours of her toilet when the bridegroom arrived. He cast his wishing eyes around, but found not the object they were in search of.

Mr. Mennill saw, and felt for him; he rung the bell. "Let your young lady know," *quoth he*, "we are impatient for the favour of her company;" or words I presume to that effect.

They

They waited—again they waited—no Miss Mennill. Again the bell was rung; half a dozen male and female servants popped their heads into the room all at once looking like so many ghosts, pale, quaking, quivering, and almost speechless, with terror—their young lady was not to be found!

Edmond, my dear Edmond, can you, is it in nature to fancy a more joyous scene of confusion than that which followed this extraordinary intelligence? Do not flatter yourself with hopes that I mean to describe it; I know the extent of my talents rather better than that comes to.

“Not to be found,” exclaimed one.

“Not to be found?” screamed another.

“No, not to be found,” cried the croaking messengers; “we cannot open  
Miss



Miss Belinda's room door, and therefore conclude some mischief has happened; indeed, indeed, Sir, please your honors, we fear she has made away with herself as the saying is."

"Confound your ugly faces," cried her father, "and is this all? and so because Miss Mennill chose to lock her door, you chose to give us this cursed alarm. Get out of my sight this moment, or I'll make away with every soul of ye, as the saying is."

I will not swear, Edmond, this was exactly the dialogue that passed on the ever memorable occasion, but of course something like it.

In short, up they all flew, or hobbled, according to their abilities in point of speed; knocked, called, screamed—no answer;—stared—looked aghast on each other—made away with herself, as the saying

ing is, occurred to them—horrid—yet not singular—rather so indeed for a young lady. The door was now forced open; the bird was flown, actually flown, Edmond; nor have they yet been able with all their wits to discover to what corner of this habitable globe she has taken her flight.

And so ends my story. I leave you to make your own comments on this delectable history, Edmond. I have laughed 'till I am weary—think of that first of all puppies, that brother of your's being the HERO upon such an occasion. How I enjoy the fellow's mortification, and adore the girl's spirit!

If I am not mistaken, I think you wrote me you had seen Belinda, and that she was handsome. Suppose you were to carry her off—what a triumph; but where to find her?—aye, there's the rub, Edmond. Do prithee leave your shady groves and purling streams, and come to town; I shall remain  
here

here a month longer at least; do come, and let us have a joyous laugh together about this ridiculous story.

I hear Charles does not give up the point—her father swears she shall yet be his in spite of men and devils. They forget the damsel is probably long before this time the lawful property of another; my life for it, she did not escape from one lover but to fly to another more to her taste. But come to town, and let us see how the business will end—do order your boots and set off.

Your's,

EDWARD WHARTON.

I leave

I leave my readers to imagine what an effect this letter produced in the mind of Edmond. He was breathless with impatience to get to the end of it, and when he had done so, scarce knew a word that was in it distinctly. Again he read it, nor could even then credit his senses—a thousand hopes, a thousand fears by turns took possession of him. He knew his friend's lively imagination, and that he embellished every story he told by his facetious manner in relating it. Ignorant how deeply he was interested in it, he had probably exaggerated the circumstances, nay perhaps put such a finishing stroke to it, as he, in the gaiety of his heart, thought *it ought* to have had, instead of that it had in *reality*.

One moment he resolved to set off for London, and the next, saw it could answer no purpose, since the lovely Miss Men-  
nill was not to be found there; he then determined to write to Wharton, entreating  
him



him to enquire minutely into the affair, and to learn the real state of the case; but above all whether it was generally believed she was gone off with another. This plan he thought most advisable, and instantly put it in execution.

TO EDWARD WHARTON, Esq.

Your most astonishing letter, my dear Wharton, has raised such a tumult in my breast that I am more than half-distracted—you will stare; and readily believe me by this beginning so very contrary to what you no doubt expected. My ideas are in such a state of perplexity and confusion, that I find it impossible to explain myself so clearly as I wish.

Suffice

Suffice it to say, that I love, I adore Miss Mennill—judge then what are my feelings at this moment. You are not deceived, Edward; I did write to you that she was handsome, but that was saying little.

On my going with my father and brother to pay my respects to her, as one whom they assured me was in a few days to be his wife, I found her not merely handsome—had that been her only perfection, never should I have envied his fate; but she is lovely beyond all power of expression; her form angelic; her voice, her manner—all, all formed to captivate the most insensible heart. I passed one whole day in her engaging company—what a day—what could I think—I knew it was the first on which she had seen Charles, this he had told me. Yet she had consented to be his. I had my father's, I had his word for it; what could I think, I say, but that charming as she appeared her heart was absolutely a stranger to every sentiment of delicacy;

delicacy ; my reason condemned her ; but my heart, my eyes, my every sense rebelled against its dictates, and I left her in a situation of mind more painful than my greatest enemy could have wished me ; firmly persuaded she was to give her hand to my brother, I fled. I hoped absence and cool reflection would convince me she *could not*, with the sentiments I had such apparent reason to ascribe to her, be the amiable creature she appeared, and never sure did woman appear more enchantingly so than she did. I fled from the too charming object, Edward, in hopes to regain the peace I had so fatally lost. How I should have succeeded I know not ; but your letter gives me reason to believe the wound has been deeper than I imagined ; a gleam of hope has rekindled the flame I wished to smother ; yet I will not swear I had even got so far as to *wish it*.

Thus you have, my dear Edward, in return for your history, that of my heart.  
Need

Need I say more, or can you guess that I depend on you for a more particular account of this, to me, interesting revolution.

Make it your business, as you value my peace, to learn the truth, and let me instantly hear from you. 'Till then I leave you to imagine the condition I shall be in: a thousand hopes, *ten* thousand fears, will by turns agitate the heart of your

EDMOND MAYNARD.

CHAP.



## CHAPTER X.

**L**EAVING Edmond to his own reflections, impatiently waiting for a second letter from his friend, let us now say a few words concerning his brother.

The disappointment he had met with was a severe blow on more accounts than one : Such was, however, the happy portion of vanity he possessed, that he was less mortified by it than any other man 'tis probable would have been ; for he very wisely set it down to the lady's want of taste and discernment ; but tho' his vanity was not much hurt, his passions were—his passions  
I say,

I say, because his heart had no more feeling or sensibility than a flint; but he admired her person, and would have given all he was worth to possess it; yet there was a still greater cause for cursing his stars, as he perpetually did most heroically—this was the loss of her fortune—his finances were in a most deplorable state; over head and ears in debt. In spite of his father's blind partiality he had not courage to let him into the true state of his affairs; one circumstance there was indeed he had scarcely courage even to think of it himself; but bad as it was, he flattered himself it would not rise up in judgment against him, till he by some fortunate stroke or other, found himself in a situation to settle it in such a manner that should give him no farther trouble. He had Mr. Men-nill's promise that his lovely daughter should still be his could she but be found, and he looked upon it as a folly to suppose she would not sooner or later. With this flattering hope, day after day went on, but no accounts could be obtained.

Charles

Charles was one evening strolling home, after having passed it with a party of his gay companions at a tavern, when as he walked on he observed two ill looking fellows attempting to rob a gentleman at the corner of the street he had just turned into. He instantly struck at one of them before he had time to see who gave the blow ; it made him stagger ; the other now saw him, and took to his heels, his companion following as fast as he could. The gentleman whom they had knocked down was not so much hurt as Charles feared, yet had received a very severe blow on his temple. He got up and expressed his gratitude for the favour so kindly done him in his thus coming to his assistance, but found himself rather giddy by the blow. Charles offered him his arm ; the gentleman thanked him, while accepting it, saying he had not fifty yards to go, and begged he would do him the favour to step into his house that he might have an opportunity not only more fully to express his gratitude, but



but also to know to whom he was so much obliged. In a few moments they reached the door; they both went in; but imagine if you can, my fair reader, what was Charles's astonishment to find two ladies sitting engaged in chat, one of whom was no other than Miss Mennill. He started—Belinda turned pale as death, and exclaimed—"good heavens, what do I see? Mr. Maynard!"—and had nearly fainted, so unspeakable was her surprise on seeing the man of all others she least wished to see introduced by Sir James Sedley.

Her friend stood petrified with astonishment in hearing Miss Mennill name him, nor was Sir James less so. All the precautions they had hitherto taken to prevent her being discovered were in a moment rendered abortive by this unlucky accident; for some moments they all stood silent, unable to express the various emotions this strange event had produced; the ladies eagerly gazing on Sir James, expecting



pecting an explanation, since it was impossible *they* could guess that mere chance was alone to blame for what had unfortunately happened.

At last Charles, who certainly had least reason to be *disconcerted*, however surprised, cried—"was ever man so blessed, thus to find, when least expected, the lovely object, whose cruel flight has rendered me from that distracting moment the most wretched of human beings; ah do not, do not, my charming Miss Mennill, damp my present joy by those killing frowns, that forbidding coldness; did you but know what your adoring Charles has suffered you would not thus ———"

"I beg, Mr. Maynard," cried Belinda, interrupting him, "you will spare yourself the trouble of attempting to describe sufferings which I am pretty certain you neither *do*, nor are *capable* of feeling. Had you that tender regard for me, you ridiculously

lously pretend, would you, as you have done, thus have drawn on me a father's displeasure? no, Sir; a man of sentiment, a man of any delicacy, would scorn to owe the hand of the woman he *adored*, as you affect to call it, to parental authority only; how you have contrived to gain so great a share of *his* favour, you best know; but give me leave to assure you *mine* you *never* can."

"Cruel Miss Mennill," replied Charles, "thus to doubt the sincerity of a passion fervent as ever warmed the breast of man; your father's partiality does me honour; I glory in it, and should think I but ill deserved the place you reproach me for having gained in his esteem and friendship, could I be weak enough to resign the invaluable treasure he encourages me to pursue, and which he has generously promised shall be mine."

"The

“The *treasure* most dear to you, Mr. Maynard, he has my free consent to bestow upon you whenever he thinks proper,” answered Belinda; “but you are most egregiously deceived if you fancy even the authority of a father shall have power to give you my hand with it.”

Sir James finding there was no probability that an amicable end would be put to this unexpected interview, now addressed himself to Charles, saying—“tho’ chance, Mr. Maynard, has laid me under an obligation to you, and tho’ no person can be more sensible of it than I acknowledge myself to be, yet I must take the liberty to remind you that it grows late,” looking at his watch. “Miss Mennill is flurried—her health may suffer—you now, Sir, know where to find her at a proper hour.”

He rung the bell. A servant appeared.

“Would



“ Would you have a chair called, Mr. Maynard? I would offer you my carriage, but fear it will detain you too long before it can be got ready.”

Charles bowed his thanks and declined accepting either. Again he made an attempt to soften the heart of his lovely mistress; but finding it in vain, was compelled to take his leave, fully determined to go instantly and acquaint her father with this joyful discovery. He flew to Portland Place; but how was he mortified when informed Mr. Mennill was not yet come home; did they know where he was to be found? he asked—they did not, was the answer. He was half out of his wits at this unlucky accident. He next went to the coffee house he generally used, with no better success. The fact was, Mr. Mennill was gone to dine with a friend at Blackheath very unexpectedly, and did not return till the following evening; Charles in the mean time  
running



running in search of him from one end of the town to the other till day light.

While he was thus employed, Miss Mennill and her friends held a hasty consultation what steps they were next to take. She found by Mr. Maynard's conversation, he was still encouraged by her father, and in no humour to give her up: to return home then would be to run into certain misery, and to remain where she was would come to the same thing, since her father would of course force her to do so the moment he knew where she was. To prevent this there was not an instant to be lost—it was now past twelve o'clock.

“Order the post chaise,” cried Lady Sedley, after a pause of a few minutes; “my dear Sir James, 'tis a fine moon light night; I will, as soon as it can possibly be got ready, convey the dear girl to Oakhill Farm, 'tis not thirty miles from London, we may reach it in a few hours.

I

I can

I can depend upon my old friends there; they will be proud and happy to render every thing agreeable to her. Their daughter is a good creature, and will play the part of an Abigail mighty well. I can be back here by dinner to-morrow, and have an hour or two's rest into the bargain; when I return, you and I, my dear Sir James, will consider what reception we are to give to those who come in quest of the fair fugitive."

The post chaise and four was that moment ordered; yet Sir James, tho' he approved of the plan upon the whole, was fearful lest some accident should happen to them on the road, and fifty other fears; he wished to be their conductor himself, rather than trust them alone; but gave up the point at their united entreaties, as they assured him there could be no danger; a highwayman was all they had to apprehend, and for this they would make up their minds as well as purses. In fine, after  
putting

putting up a few necessary articles, away they drove, and were actually on the turnpike road in less than an hour after the plan was formed.

They arrived at Farmer Thompson's about six o'clock in the morning. Great, it may be imagined, was the surprise of the good folks to receive such unexpected guests. An excellent breakfast was got ready with all expedition. This revived them. Lady Sedley, in a few words, gave the necessary orders in regard to her young friend, and after taking an hour's rest tenderly embraced her early charge, bidding her adieu, and promising to write every particular of what might happen on her return, got into her carriage, and was in Wimpole Street by one o'clock. She had the precaution however to quit it at some distance from her house, taking a chair, to prevent as far as possible the observation of her neighbours.

Thus was the important point got over without any accident or loss of time. Lady Sedley was in high spirits with her success, and enjoyed the thoughts of the disappointment she had prepared for the unfortunate lover.

“Have we not managed this business most delightfully, my dear Sir James?” said her ladyship.

“Indeed you have, my love,” replied he; “but to tell you the truth, I fear the most puzzling part of it yet remains: pray what are we to say to her father and his intended son?”

“I vow I do not exactly know *that*,” replied Lady Sedley, “’tis rather an awkward piece of business I must confess.”

She paused a moment; at last cried—  
“will you, my dear Sir James, leave that wholly to me; a thought has just struck me,  
me,



me—'tis ridiculous I grant; but never mind that, so is Mr. Mennill's whole proceeding."

"Most willingly," answered Sir James, "I have no desire to undertake it I do assure you."

"Oh but you must play your part too in the farce," replied she; "one performer will never do."

"Well, and what character am I to support pray?" cried Sir James, smiling.

"Why only this," said her ladyship: "when the parties concerned arrive, receive Mr. Mennill with your usual civility as if nothing had happened. Should Charles be with him, bow to him as a person you never till that moment set eyes on; appear astonished at any enquiries they make concerning Miss Mennill, and leave the rest to me; I am sensible I shall be compelled

compelled to tell a few *fib*s, but it shall be as few as possible. This is my plot, and tho' I may not *firmly* persuade Mr. Mennill that the story Charles has told him is absolutely a *dream*, he shall at least be so puzzled and confounded as not to know positively whether it is or not."

Sir James laughed heartily at the drollery of her scheme, feared she would not be able to keep it up; but promised to second her to the best of his power. He was just going to take his hat in order to go out.

"Heavens!" cried her ladyship, "what are you going to do? you forget the farce may for aught we know be on the point of beginning. Depend upon it they will be here in a few minutes. My wonder is they have not arrived long ere now."

He resumed his seat. Her ladyship sat down to her tambour, endeavouring to acquire courage and composure for the scene  
she

she had to go through. Why the gentlemen were so late, my reader knows already I presume. Mr. Mennill had been at Blackheath. Charles's impatience for his return home may easily be conceived: fifty times was he, as soon as the morning dawned, on the point of going to Wimpole street, but as often considered his going alone could answer no purpose. He sent a servant however to watch the door: alas! he was many hours too late for making any discovery; all was peace and quietness there.

At last Mr. Mennill arrived at his house, where the restless and almost sleepless Charles not only astonished but highly delighted him with the important intelligence he had to communicate. The old gentleman now cursed Blackheath and all its inhabitants, but consoled himself with the thought that he should of course find the run-away at Sir James's, since he with reason concluded their attempting to conceal her *now* could  
answer

answer no purpose after she had been seen there. The carriage not having been dismissed, they now both entered it, and with no small emotion drove to Sir Charles Sedley's. But however violent their's might be, Lady Sedley's was infinitely more so when she heard their rap and saw them enter into the house.

“How do you do, my good friend?” said Sir James, cordially taking his hand, and at the same time making a polite bow to Charles; “I trust you bring Lady Sedley and myself some pleasing intelligence: have you heard any thing of her young friend?”

“Heyday!” cried the astonished father, looking first on one and then on the other; “what the devil does all this mean?”

“Mean, my dear Sir,” said her ladyship; “did you then suppose we were ignorant of the unfortunate affair that has  
given



given you so much trouble and uneasiness?"

"No, by the Lord I suppose no such thing, because I have pretty good reason to suppose the contrary." And while saying this he cast an inquisitive glance to every corner of the room.

"I fear, Mr. Mennill, replied Lady Sedley, "by the manner in which you express yourself, my dear Sir, you have thought us negligent in not sending more frequent enquiries; but the truth is we thought it could answer no end except giving you trouble; well assured you would kindly inform us when you had any news likely to give us pleasure, and such I confess I hoped was your motive for this visit."

"All this is Greek and Hebrew to me, by all that's good!" cried he rising, with looks of amazement: "Sir James, is your  
I 3 lady

lady in her right senses?—are you? am I? Charles,” continued he, what say you to all this? can you make head or tail of it, for curse me if I can.”

“Fore gad,” cried Charles, “’tis as complete a *bore* as ever I had the honour to meet with. All I have to say is that I had the felicity last night, very unexpectedly indeed, to pay my devoirs to your charming daughter in this very room, if I am not egregiously mistaken.”

“Sir,” cried Lady Sedley, as if she had not comprehended him, “pray may I beg you to repeat what you was so good as to say, for I fear I did not clearly understand you?”

“The devil you did not!” cried Mr. Mennill; “I am sorry to say I fancy your ladyship’s intellects are not very clear this morning.”

“Indeed

“ Indeed I believe you are right,” replied she; “ for to tell you the truth I was a sad rake last night. We dined with a large party; from thence went to Ranelagh; and did not return home ’till I am almost ashamed to say how late this morning. People go to public places now at such ridiculous hours there’s no enduring it.”

Sir James found it nearly impossible to keep his gravity; Charles stood staring with his eyes on the full stretch, as if trying to discover whether he was or was not awake.

“ Look ye, Sir James,” cried Mr. Mennill, “ all this may, for aught I know to the contrary, be very clever, very witty, and all that, but as I have other business at present, I will take it as a favour if you will be kind enough either to call my daughter down or let me step up and fetch her.”

“ Nay,

“Nay, Mr. Mennill,” cried Lady Sedley, affecting to smile, “I shall be tempted to believe, if you carry this joke much farther, that you too, my good friend, have been raking all night as well as ourselves.”

“What? my daughter, Belinda Mennill,” answered he with an emphasis, “is not in this house then you would persuade me, would you?”

“Upon my word,” said Sir James, “I should suppose it would require no extraordinary share of eloquence to do that.”

“What she is not here then, hey?”

No, upon my honour!”

“Charles,” cried he turning to him, “pray do me the favour to tell me what I am to think of all this?”

“By all that’s whimsical,” replied he, with looks of amazement, “’tis the most unac-



unaccountable affair I ever had the honour to be engaged in. I can only repeat that I was happy enough to do that gentleman"—bowing to Sir James—"a trifling piece of service last night, that he in return very politely asked me into his house; that *in his* house to my unspeakable joy and surprise, I saw, and conversed for some time with Miss Mennill."

"Pray," said Lady Sedley, interrupting him, "of what nature was the service you mention?"

"I mean not to boast of it, Madam," replied he: "I found Sir James likely to be robbed by two ill looking rascals, and had the good fortune I believe to prevent it."

"Oh now I trust we shall come to a right understanding," said Lady Sedley. "My dear," added she, turning to Sir James, this young gentleman is pretty *nearly* right, *tho' not quite.*"

"I begin

“ I begin to understand the matter perfectly,” answered he.—Then turning to Charles—“ the mistake you are under, Sir, is now easily explained ; you have in the first place only taken one door for another ; Sir James Selby, who lives in the very next house, was, our servants inform us, attacked last night while we were out ; and I think, my dear, they also mentioned the assistance he so fortunately met with from a stranger.”

“ So my daughter, it *would appear*, has all this time been your next door neighbour,” cried Mr. Mennill, “ and I am to believe you knew nothing at all of the matter.”

“ And I,” said Charles, interrupting him, “ am *to believe* I never till now set eyes upon *that* lady and that *gentleman* ; the resemblance between the Selby’s, I think you call them, and yourselves must be uncommonly striking indeed, or I must be  
horridly

horridly blind that could mistake one for the other. Please heaven, I will this moment go and have a second peep at my new friends ; if I go on at this rate I shall make a pretty considerable addition to the number of my acquaintance. Be comforted, my dear Sir," speaking to Mr. Mennill, "our troubles must I think be very near at an end since we have got within a door of the dear creature.—And he was taking his hat for that purpose.

"I am sorry to inform you the family set off early this morning for Scarborough," said Sir James Sedley, "so that you cannot, so soon as you wish, improve the intimacy with them so happily commenced."

"Oh damn Scarborough," cried Mr. Mennill, out of all patience, "you too we heard some time ago were gone for that place ; but perhaps you were *then* also taken for them."

"Why

“ Why no,” replied Lady Sedley, smiling, “ I fancy not, as we were there about a month or six weeks since ; but had we not, I should not be in the least surpris’d at your having heard it, for a thousand things are reported in this good town of ours which have no foundation ; but if, as this young gentleman affirms, he really saw and spoke to my lovely young friend there last night, I confess I am rather surpris’d you were so late this morning in making farther enquiry, tho’ as it unluckily happens you could not very well have called before the hour they set out ; indeed if Miss Mennill actually was with them, which forgive me, Sir, if I can hardly yet give credit to, ’tis more than probable they hurried out of town on purpose to avoid them.”

“ Why that,” said Mr. Mennill, “ is, as your ladyship observes, likely enough ; as to the reason of my being so late, the truth is I knew nothing of the matter till within this hour ; I happened to be out of town.



town. But who the devil are these Selby's? I never heard the girl mention them, yet they must be on a pretty intimate footing or they would not take the trouble of galloping up and down the country in this manner to please her cursed whims and fancies, and encourage her in her disobedience."

"Upon my word," said her ladyship, "I have not the pleasure of their acquaintance, nor did I ever, as you observe, Sir, hear Miss Mennill mention them; which makes me, I confess, still inclined to think there must be some mistake."

"Oh pardon me there," cried Charles, "if I am compelled to discredit my eyesight in regard to your ladyship and Sir James; the universe combined shall never persuade me I did not both see and talk to the cruel Belinda."

"Well,

“ Well, ’tis a confounded piece of business altogether,” said Mr. Mennill, “ as ever I met with, from beginning to end ; however, Charles, since we have got scent of the huffey, we’ll even pursue it ; I’ll be cursed if she escapes me now ; and by my soul these Selby’s shall pay dear for giving me such a jaunt.”

“ You mean then to follow them ?” said Sir James.

“ Follow them,” replied the other, “ to be sure I do ; but don’t mistake me—not for love of the girl believe me ; no, no, she has effectually done for herself in that particular ; but since my friend Charles here has not got the better of his love, as I have of mine, and still wishes to have her, by heavens he shall, were it only that I may break her heart ; for I find she has thought proper to engage her affections elsewhere, without taking the trouble to consult her father upon the occasion.”

So

So saying, to the unspeakable satisfaction of Lady Sedley, they took their leave. Charles, as he walked to the door casting a doubtful eye around him, as much as to say, "if this is not the identical house I was in last night, I shall not wonder if hereafter I forget my own name, or when looking in my glass take myself for somebody else."

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER XI.

THEY now proceeded to Sir John Maynard's, to whom they related the blundering story, informing him of their resolution to set off next morning to Scarborough, wishing he would make one of the party. This however Sir John declined, saying three could not conveniently travel in one post chaise, and either of them going in another alone would be rather a dull piece of business. Next morning then the father and hopeful son elect set off without a doubt of success, in pursuit of the fair fugitive; and Lady Sedley, being pretty well recovered from the fatigues of the past day, as soon as breakfast was over sat down

to



to give Belinda an account of all that had happened since they parted.

Her ladyship's letter, though full of humour and vivacity, yet contained in substance merely what we are already acquainted with, so 'tis not necessary to insert it. It found Miss Mennill as comfortably settled as could well be expected, furrounded as she was by strangers only. The family consisted of farmer Thompson, his wife, and one daughter. Mrs. Thompson had formerly lived with Lady Sedley's mother, and was a very worthy, sensible woman; Fanny was a fine blooming girl, about twenty, to whom her father, she being an only child, could give three or four hundred pounds on the day of her marriage, happen when it would, without leaving himself and wife penniless.

Their attention to every wish of Miss Mennill was unremitted. Why they were thus honoured with her company they knew not,

not, and had too much good sense to enquire. It was enough to know Lady Sedley had herself brought her there, and given them the strictest charges to pay her every possible respect as *her* most intimate friend. This they soon found would be a most pleasant task. Fanny was from the day of her arrival taken from all other work, that she might attend wholly upon her young lady, as she now called her.

That Belinda's mind was by no means at ease, is most certain: She lamented her father's ideas of what would make her happy should unfortunately differ so widely from her own. She was shocked to find by what Mr. Maynard said at the unexpected meeting, that he continued in the same way of thinking. While he did so she could not bring herself to think of returning home, and therefore endeavoured to reconcile herself to her present situation till things should take a more favourable turn. Indeed there could hardly be a more pleasant situation;

situation; the house was better than she had formed an idea of; and the country, as far as she could see around it, appeared particularly fine. Fanny too had assured her it was so, and moreover that at about half a mile distance there was a gentleman's seat, which was reckoned one of the most beautiful places in the county. "The gardens," continued the communicative Fanny, "are quite delightful: I am sure, madam, you will be no less so to walk there now and then; and I am well acquainted with the head gardener, who often calls here, and sometimes brings my mother and me a nosegay: he will be proud to shew them to you at any time I am sure."

Miss Mennill thanked her for the intelligence; and as she was fond of walking, agreed to go the first fine morning. In the mean time Lady Sedley's account of her interview with her father and lover diverted her highly, except that she felt rather hurt  
at

at his being sent on such a wild goose chase to Scarborough. This she at first could not entirely approve of, yet on mature reflection hoped the journey and change of air might be of service to him, as he took too little exercise in general for his health.

She had not long to wait for a fine day; the very next was uncommonly so; and Fanny did not forget, when she carried up her breakfast to remind her of her intended walk. She readily undertook it, accompanied by her delighted guide, who innocently took every means in her power to make the place appear to the greatest advantage, by exaggerating the beauties of that delightful spot. However upon the whole, her little excursion far exceeded her expectations, for she had not followed the gardener through half the pleasant windings and turnings of his little paradise, as he called it, before, turning hastily round to Belinda, he cried—"as I live, there is my master—I am certain he will be highly pleased



pleased to pay his compliments to so lovely a lady. With your leave, I will just step on a little, and tell him you are here."

"Oh by no means," answered Miss Mennill, "'tis quite needless to give him that trouble."—But John was off, and in a moment returned, accompanied by—Edmond Maynard. He stopped on seeing her, and gazed, unable to believe his senses; but at last convinced they did not deceive him, exclaimed with joy sparkling in his fine eyes as he spoke—"Miss Mennill! is it possible?"

"While Belinda, no less astonished than himself, cried—"good heavens! Mr. Maynard, is it you?"

"It is, it is the happy, the thrice happy Edmond, my lovely Belinda!" replied he, in raptures. "Oh that my meeting you thus unexpectedly *here* may be a fortunate  
K omen;

omen; surely, surely it must; heaven has at last heard my prayers, and sent the dear object of my tenderest affections to complete my felicity."

Belinda's amazement at finding *him* the master of this delightful spot now gave place to that of hearing from him a language so little expected. She was unable to speak; her surprise, and let me add, her joy, put it absolutely out of her power to articulate one syllable. Her intelligent eyes indeed might, had he not been lost in so sweet a confusion, have told him, however unexpected, it was by no means unpleasant.

He now tenderly taking her unreluctant hand, added—"Can you pardon me, Miss Mennill—can you forgive this too hasty discovery of my sentiments? I condemn myself—I see the impropriety of my behaviour; but to meet you thus, to meet you *here*, when I believed ——"

"And

“ And what did you then believe ?” said Belinda, walking gently on, that the attendants might no longer be witness to a scene she found too interesting to her heart ; “ tell me, Mr. Maynard, what did you believe ?”

Edmond, who had in order to support his lovely companion, put her arm gently under his own, looking tenderly upon her, answered—“ Oh, Belinda—Oh, Miss Men- nill !” checking the familiarity of his first address ; “ what had I not to apprehend when I saw you last.”

“ *First* you might have said with equal propriety,” cried she, smiling ; “ for if I forget not, Mr. Maynard, *this* is but our second time of meeting, yet you would I find”

“ I understand you,” said Edmond ; “ ’tis true, I saw you but once ; but however I may be to blame in having in this un-  
K 2 guarded

guarded manner declared the impresson your incomparable charms that day made upon my heart, or however improbable your amiable modesty may lead you to believe *one* interview could make so indelible an impresson, it is *infinitely* less strange than true ; but tell me, my lovely Belinda ; (will you pardon me," continued he, " for daring to address you by that tender appellation ;)—tell me, I earnestly intreat you, by what happy, what unaccountable means does it happen, that I am thus blessed with a sight of you here ; here, where of all places on earth I should least have presumed to hope for so great, so unspeakable a felicity. Where is my brother, where  
———"

" Oh heaven above knows," cried Miss Mennill, " where he is ; far on his way to Scarborough by this time I believe."

" To Scarborough !" exclaimed Edmond ;



mond; "has he then at last resigned his presumptuous hopes?"

"Oh fie, Mr. Maynard," said she, smiling; "would you, after all the fine things you have been saying, now spoil all by making me so wretched a compliment as to suppose me forsaken."

Edmond, charmed with her amiable vivacity, could not resist pressing her hand to his heart as she hung on his arm, a more pleasing proof of his approbation to the heart of the happy Belinda than any words could possibly have been.

"So far from being forsaken," continued she in the same agreeable manner, "the poor soul is at this moment posting there in search of his lost Dulcinea, who might to be sure, had she been so inclined, have informed him he would have his labour for his pains, as you, his brother, can now testify."

"Yes,"

“ Yes,” cried the transported Edmond,  
“ and I fervently thank heaven that I can !  
Oh, Miss Mennill——”

“ Nay,” cried she, “ I thought you  
had juſt now got leave to cry *Oh Be-  
linda !*”

“ Have I then your leave to call you by  
that dear name,” replied he, tenderly gaz-  
ing on her ; “ go one ſtep—one little ſtep  
farther, and ſweetly tell me I have to call  
you *my Belinda.*”

“ Nay, *that* is quite another matter,”  
replied ſhe ; “ *my* makes a moſt wonderful  
difference ; we will reſerve that favour for  
our *third* meeting if ever it ſhould happen ;  
we have I think done tolerably well for the  
*ſecond.*”

“ If my Belinda——”

“ So, ſo,” cried ſhe, interrupting him,  
“ in

“ in case it should not happen, I find you are resolved to make sure of the present; but pray observe tis without my permission —,”

Just as she uttered this, they found themselves at the entrance of an elegant summer house, placed on the banks of a clear rivulet which meandered through the grove they were now in. He led her towards it.

“ It grows late,” said Belinda, looking at her watch. Edmond sighed. “ You are a strange, unthinking being,” continued she, “ or more void of curiosity than any mortal I ever met with. Here have we been chatting this hour and half, and you have not yet asked me whereabouts in this neighbourhood the castle I inhabit is situated. But as I think, if I mistake not, you have called me angelic and so forth, you conjecture I have dropped from the clouds

clouds merely to pay you a visit in this Paradise."

Again he pressed her hand to his heart, intreating she would step in for a few moments, lest she should find herself fatigued, and there gratify his curiosity.

This however she declined; but said if *he* was not fatigued he might walk with her towards her villa, and she would endeavour to oblige him.

With rapture he obeyed; and before they reached Mr. Thompson's (where he guessed she came from, by her attendant Fanny, though how, or why she came there he could not possibly conceive,) Belinda had given him a brief account of all that had passed since she first saw him at her father's house, except what had passed in her heart: but even of this he began to flatter himself he was not quite so ignorant as before this happy meeting. Being well acquainted



acquainted at the farm, he lingered in hopes Belinda would have asked him in. Whether inclined to do so is uncertain; she did not however; and Edmond, more in love than ever man was, after intreating permission to call upon her the next morning to enquire after her health, with reluctance, and a most expressive sigh when obliged to resign the soft hand he had so long had possession of, he took his leave, and bid her a solitary adieu.

Fanny and her friend John had been nearly as much surpris'd at what they had seen as either of the lovers. They too had formed a variety of conjectures, but unfortunately they had no means to come to any degree of certainty. " 'Twas strange!—'twas wondrous strange!" and there they were obliged to rest. They hoped however a short time, and their honest endeavours, would clear up the mystery.

Miss Mennill had no sooner rested her-

self after her delightful walk, than taking up her pen, she gave a particular account of the events of the day to her friend Lady Sedley, in which the amiable Edmond made the principal figure. Never had she sat down to write with so heart-felt pleasure, for never till now was she mistress of a subject so infinitely dear to it. The farm from that moment appeared to her as the most favoured spot on earth. She every hour found new beauties in every tree, in every shrub. The birds seemed to sing with unusual sweetness; every thing around her wore the face of sweet content and tranquility; she herself had to her kind hosts appeared even before this happy day more of the angel than a mere mortal like themselves, but now, the engaging smiles that played about the loveliest mouth in the world, and the charming vivacity that appeared in all she said and did, now tempted them to suspect she was not.

Leaving her thus employed, let us now  
enquire

enquire how the two gentlemen made out their journey to Scarborough. On the third day after their leaving London, they arrived at that place of gaiety and dissipation in perfect health, but in no disposition to partake of the amusements going forward at that place. Charles indeed would have entered into them all most gladly, but feared his old friend might, were he to indulge his inclination, suspect the fervor of his passion for the object of their search.

## CHAPTER XII.

THEY were no sooner seated in a comfortable room at the house they put up, than calling for the master of it, they began to ask the names of the families now in town. The landlord, scratching his head to help his memory, gave them a list of all he could recollect—Selby however was not of the number. Mr. Mennill now asked him if there was not a family of that name there at present. Mr. Boniface again applied his hand to his head, then stroaked his chin, looking up to the ceiling in profound thought,



thought, as if seeking for information from thence.

At last—"Selby?—Selby? did your honour say," cried he; "no, no, there certainly is not."—Then another pause—"Selby?—oh I have it—your honor must pardon me, we have so many people coming and going every day, that 'tis hard to say who is or who is not here; but I have it now—Squire Selby's family, or a name so like it that I think that is it, left this place yesterday, not finding lodgings to their minds, and are gone to Harrowgate."

"The devil they are," cried Mr. Mennill. "They had a young lady with them, had they not?"

"Yes, please your honor," replied the landlord, "I rather think they had."

"I wish to the Lord old Nick had them all together," cried Mr. Mennill.

"Your

“Your honor is pleased to be merry,” said the master of the inn, judging *that* the civillest thing he could say in answer to the above.

“Oh yes, I am cursedly inclined to be merry, as you very sagaciously observe. Get me a chicken for my supper as fast as you can: d’ye hear me, see that I have a well aired bed, and let my carriage be at the door by eight in the morning—merry indeed!”

“Yes, your honor,” replied the honest landlord, bowing; “your honor will I hope take something before you set out; the mornings get cold apace now, and an empty stomach is as bad as an empty purse, as my wife says—they generally travel together.”

“You may tell her from me,” answered Mr. Mennill, “that you and she are the fittest company for each other.”

“True,

“ True, your honor, very true as I’m a finner; then I’ll order a doctor for the morning, shall I, your honor? ’twill be comfortable.”

“ Oh damn your doctors,” cried Mr. Mennill, unfortunately mistaking a certain composition of the landlord’s own manufacturing for one of the faculty; “ do I look as if I came here to consult their large wigs? shew me one of the whole fraternity who at my age can shew such a stock of health, or travel at the rate I have done for the last three days.”

“ Aye blefs your worship! as you say I might look long enough before I found one,” replied mine host. Gladly would he have set his honor right in regard to the doctor; but prudently held his tongue, lest, as he appeared rather touchy, he should take it in his head to be angry at having his ignorance thus discovered tho’ in so trifling a matter. He retired therefore to  
order

order the chicken and a few other articles, merely that the bill next morning might look better in the face, as Corporal Trim, of worthy memory, would have said.

Charles, during this dialogue, had been walking about the room, looking at the prints it was decorated with, reading the rules to be observed at the assembly which hung framed and glazed over the chimney, and several other things equally entertaining, at the same time humming a favorite air in the last new opera; finding it come to a conclusion, he now took a chair and made an attempt to reconcile his travelling companion to the disappointment they had met with, observing they might with ease reach Harrowgate by dinner next day. In answer to this consolatory remark he got only a dry—"I suppose so:" this was no great encouragement to proceed: however he tried it again with no better success, and was once or twice tempted to wish himself quietly in London with his more lively com-



companions, and to leave the old gentleman to follow his daughter's footsteps at his leisure; certain it is the journey had greatly lessened the attachment he had before felt for Belinda, for to his utter amazement he no longer felt the wound he fancied Miss Mennill's charms had made in his heart, so painful as it was when he first received it; but then the *thirty thousand pounds down*, his passion for that he found if possible for than ever, having had time during his journey to make some unpleasant reflections on the lightness of his purse, and the difficulty of filling it by any other means. Since Mr. Mennill therefore chose to take so much trouble in order to accomplish his purpose; he thought, however the violence of his passion for her person might be evaporated during the bustle, the wisest thing he could do was to second his endeavours to the utmost of his power. To bed then they both went, after a no very chearful supper, and by eight next morning found themselves driving full speed to Harrowgate;

rowgate; at which place in due time they arrived; and putting up at the Green Dragon, enquired if a family of the name of Selby were there, or to their knowledge at any of the other houses.

There they were not, nor had they heard of any such, though they might be nevertheless at the Marquis of Granby, the Queen's Head, or some other of the inns.

Charles undertook to set off in search of them; while his weary companion ordered dinner. Glad was he even of this little dissipation; he went to all the public rooms, met with two or three of his acquaintance, told them of his being turned knight errant, and enquired of every soul he met for those confounded Selby's, as he with some reason called them. All in vain—no such name could he hear of.

At last one of the waiters said, a Mr. Headly's family had that morning set off  
for

for York, in order to be at the races; it sounded like it, if his honor was not *quite* certain that Sedley *was* the name, it might possibly be the other."

"It may," cried he, "for as to being certain, I certainly am not; Sedley, Headly," repeated Charles; "curse me if I now know which is which, 'tis such a confounded piece of business, such a jumble of confusion. I suppose it must after all be Headly. You are sure," continued he, "they are to make some stay at York?"

"So the servants told me," replied the waiter.

"Had they a young lady with them?" cried Charles.

"Yes, Sir," answered the fellow, "they had two, and one of them was reckoned handsome, and a large fortune."

"Oh

“ Oh it must be so ; you are undoubtedly right,” said Charles, again repeating Sedley, Headly, so often that he totally forgot that Selby was in fact the name he set off with.

He found Mr. Mennill on his return at the Green Dragon considerably more in temper than when he left him ; he had drank pretty near a bottle of excellent claret, which had produced a very agreeable effect on his spirits, to which the information Charles now brought added not a little, they looked upon their trouble and fatigue as pretty near over, as he was assured they were to make some stay at York. As to the jumble of names, the more they talked the matter over, the more they were convinced that it must be Headly, as that was clearly more like Sedley than Selby.

Their next day's journey was but a step ; no need therefore to rise early on that account. However so great was Mr. Mennill's



nill's impatience to get his daughter once again into his own hands, that he was in his carriage by ten next morning, and by two at Bluit's inn, in York.

"Is Mr. Headly's family here?" cried he as the waiter led him to a room.

"Yes, please your honor," answered he.

Mr. Mennill, turning his head to Charles, giving him a significant wink, cried, "we are right at last, my boy, thank heaven;" and in they went in high spirits.

"Send your master here," continued he.

"Yes, your honor," replied the waiter, and disappeared instantly. Mr. Bluit soon after entered the room to know his worship's pleasure.

He

He now ordered his dinner, and then said, "so I find Mr. Headly and his family are here, Mr. Bluit."

"Yes, Sir," replied he, "they arrived yesterday."

"Aye," replied the delighted Mr. Mennill, "so I heard at Harrowgate; be so good as to step with my compliments, and tell him I shall be glad to wait upon him for a few moments."

"Alas, Sir," answered Bluit, "I fear the poor gentleman is in no humour to receive company, he is in a sad taking at present."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Mr. Mennill.

"Matter enough," replied the other. "A young lady who came here with him, and to whom he is either guardian or a relation

lation I suppose, for I do not find she is his daughter ; ran off this morning before day light with a young fellow to Scotland.”+

“ The devil she did,” cried Mr. Mennill and Charles both in a breath, with looks of confusion, rage, and disappointment. “ I wish with all my soul every female in the kingdom was at the bottom of the sea. Guardian indeed—by heavens I have a great mind to go and blow the rascal’s brains out.”

Charles, thinking this would answer no purpose in regard to himself, now endeavoured to pacify him, begging he would not lose an instant, since they were now in so fair a way of finding her ; but set off that moment in pursuit of the happy pair whom they might easily overtake, he made no doubt, and it would be time enough to blow the old gentleman’s brains out when they came back.

“ Get

“Get my carriage this moment,” cried the now exasperated father, “let me have four of the best horses in your stables. By all that’s good if I do overtake them, I will effectually cool their passions. Make haste, fly; do you hear, Sir; say nothing of all this to her guardian, as you call him, until I come back; I have not done with him yet. If you blab, depend upon it you’ll lose a customer, for he’ll hardly wait till I return.

Away ran Bluit unable to conjecture what all this could mean. While the horses were putting to our two travellers eat a Sandwich, drank a glass of wine, and in a state of mind more easily imagined than described, set off as fast as four stout horses could carry them.

At the fourth stage they asked if they had a couple there on their road to Gretna Green, as you may be sure they had done at them all. The landlord, guessing at  
once



once by the smoaking condition of their horses that they meant to stop the journey of the lovers, putting his finger sily to his lips and pointing to a particular room with an expressive look, nodded his assent to the question, leading them quietly into one adjoining to that in which the lovers were. All this caution was highly necessary on the part of the sagacious landlord ; but his two guests were in no humour to be very ceremonious ; without waiting therefore for his introduction, in they both bounced to the great terror of the poor trembling lovers ; who hearing the rattling of their carriage had given themselves over for lost, not doubting but they were pursued. But judge what astonishment filled the whole group when they saw each other. The young lady's fears indeed on seeing a pair of strangers, were considerably lessened ; but not so soon Mr. Mennill's rage ; for as she had drawn back to the darkest corner of the apartment, he sprung forwards, drawing her from it by the shoulders, and call-

L

ing

ing her by no very tender names. But in a moment perceiving his mistake, he let her go, and exclaimed—"why who, in the devil's name, are you?"

"And pray, gentlemen, who the devil are you?" cried the now re-assured lover, stepping briskly up to them, "that thus presume to intrude upon our privacy?"

"Who," replied Mr. Mennill in the greatest consternation; "I will not undertake to ascertain even that or any thing else, again as long as I live. I beg your pardon let that suffice. Take my word for it I have more reason to be angry than you have; but that's no affair of your's."

So saying, he bounced out of the room with as little ceremony as he had bounced into it, cursing every thing that fell in his way, not forgetting poor Belinda, whom he now gave up, swearing he had finally  
done

done with her, and she might go to the devil her own way; and getting into his carriage, the poor mortified Charles *unbidden* took his seat by him, and they set off on their return for London. A most uncomfortable pair of companions they now proved to each other as ever travelled: the latter wishing with all his soul he had never set his eyes on either the father or daughter, and looking upon the whole from beginning to end as a most complete *bore*; the former repeatedly swearing women were formed for no earthly purpose but to plague every mortal who had any thing to do with them. I am not sure whether he did not in his own mind swear to turn even Wilson out of doors the moment he got home. Home he did get to at last: but there was a certain insinuating something in that damsel's countenance which the moment she flew to welcome his honor's safe return put that cruel purpose quite out of his head. Charles immediate-

ly took his leave, not much delighted with the thoughts of giving Sir John the particulars of their sentimental journey.



## CHAPTER XIII.

AS soon as Mr. Mennill had by Wilton's care and attention recovered some degree of temper, she told him that a young man had called two or three times during his absence, and that she had asked him if he had any message to leave; that he answered he had not, yet wished to speak to Mr. Mennill about very particular business, and would call again.

“What can the fellow want with me?” said Mr. Mennill.

“I can't

"I can't guess," answered she, "but he seems very anxious to see your honor."

"Well, let me know when he comes again."

This he did in a few days, and was admitted.

"Well, friend," said Mr. Mennill, "pray what is your pleasure with me?"

"Please your honor, replied the man, I am come to tell you I can inform you where Miss Mennill is."

"You inform me," cried her father. "Are you sure, young man, of what you say?"

"Perfectly sure, Sir," answered he, "for I was the postillion who drove her out of town."

"The

“ The devil you was ! and how then have you the impudence to see my face ? who are you ? who employed you ? was she accompanied by a lover ? ”

“ No, please your honor, she was not. But I must make a few conditions by your leave, Sir, before I proceed to give any farther particulars relative to this business. In the first place I must have your honor’s word that you will not ask who employed me, or who I live with, because I neither want to lose a good place, nor to betray my mistress farther than is necessary : and in the next place, as I am a poor fellow who work hard for my bread, I hope your honor will not think me to blame for hoping you will reward me for the discovery I have it in my power to make.”

“ Well,” cried Mr. Mennill, not a little agitated at the thoughts of having an opportunity at last of being revenged on poor Belinda for all the trouble she had  
cost

cost him, "tell me first, are you certain she is not married to some worthless fellow or other, since in that case I shall leave her to follow her own devices."

"No that she a'nt I'll take my oath," replied the postillion.

"Beware how you venture to swear unless you are very certain," said Mr. Men-  
nill, "that you are right."

"O I wish," replied he, "I was as sure of a good reward."

"And what sum now," cried Mr. Men-  
nill, "should you look upon as such?"

"Why I hope your honor will not think ten guineas too much?"

"Pretty well, pretty well," replied he, "for being engaged in so infamous a business."

"But



“ But confider please your worſhip, I am but a poor *ſarvent* [*ſcratching his head.*]

“ True. And you are abſolutely ſure I ſhall find her where you left her?”

“ Quite ſure,” ſaid the informer.

“ Well then I will give you the ſum you aſk on your own conditions; ſo let me have all the neceſſary information inſtantly.”

This he gave in a very particular manner; and having pocketed his reward took his leave.

Mr. Mennill was now agitated with a thouſand different emotions; rage and indignation however, we are ſorry to ſay, were predominant. At ſome moments he thought giving her to Maynard was too great a reward for her diſobedience; but

then again he considered that though he looked upon it in that light his daughter did not: on the contrary it was to shun being his she had taken this unpardonable step. What greater punishment then could he devise than compelling her to give him her hand? However severe she might think it, he was persuaded the world would acquit him. This reflection determined him at once. He ordered his carriage, and driving to his friend Sir John, gave him an account of the discovery he had so fortunately made. Charles was present, and found as his hopes revived his passion began to revive also, and pressed for an immediate departure in search of his charming though cruel mistress.

They first however held a consultation on the subject of the compulsive measures they were determined to follow if possible. The plan had its difficulties they were but too sensible. The spirit she had already shewn convinced them they would not be easily

easily conquered. Sir John promised to have a special licence in readiness against their return. He would prepare the clergyman to expect no very willing bride, and all that then remained was for Mr. Men- nill to convey her to church on the day they should appoint.

Having settled this important matter in the best manner they were able, the father of Belinda, with her unworthy lover, agreed to set off once more together; but in far better spirits than before, being now certain where to find her. As they had perfectly recovered the fatigue of their former peregrinations, they set off by six o'clock next morning, hoping to have her safe in Portland Place the same evening; the farm, as we have already said, being not more than thirty miles from London,

Charles, as they advanced towards the place of Belinda's retreat, observed that it could not, by the road they were going, be far, he fancied, from his brother's  
 feat

feat. This surmise was confirmed the farther they went. It never occurred to either of them however that *he* could be any ways interested in the present business. He had seen her but once, they imagined; and thought it more than probable, however near she might now be to him, he might be totally ignorant of it, as she of course went there in order to be concealed from one, and above all from a person so nearly connected with the very man from whom she fled, supposing she found he lived so near Oak Farm. This circumstance therefore gave them no concern.

They drove on in high spirits, looking upon all their troubles as very near an end. But judge of their mutual astonishment on coming within a hundred yards of Thompson's house, when they beheld Belinda walking by the side of the identical Edmond, familiarly leaning on his arm, her hand tenderly pressed in his.

She



She instantly knew her father's carriage, saw him, saw the now more than ever detested Charles, and instantly shrieking with terror, fell lifeless into the arms of her adoring lover. What a scene of confusion was here! for a moment Mr. Mennill felt some symptoms of parental affection on seeing her in that state of insensibility; but it was for a moment only; he had from the first been prejudiced against Edmond, he believed him a mere pedant, a mere learned blockhead, without one grain of manly spirit in his whole composition, and consequently held him in sovereign contempt.

Charles knew him better, and to his unspeakable mortification beheld in his happy brother a very formidable rival. He cursed him most fervently, and no less fervently wished him at old Nick.

While making these no very pleasant reflections they had left the carriage, and sprung forwards to receive their prey,  
meaning

meaning to convey her in the state she was in to the nearest inn, and there at their leisure use proper means to bring her to herself; but Edmond was in no humour to resign his lovely burthen, he clasped her to his breast, declaring no power on earth should force her from him.

“ May be so, young man,” cried Mr. Mennill, more than ever enraged at what he called his impertinent declaration, “ we shall soon see who dares dispute the will of a justly incensed father.”

While this altercation passed, Belinda faintly opened her eyes, and begging Edmond would disengage her from his encircling arms with a look that pierced him to the soul, she dropped on her knees to her father, unable to ask that forgiveness she so earnestly wished him to grant.

“ And must I then lose you, my dear Belinda !” cried her amiable lover ; “ must  
I thus

I thus resign the fond hopes I have been permitted to indulge?—oh Miss Men-  
nill?”

“ Yes,” cried her father with fury in his eyes, on finding *he* was the man who had occasioned all this trouble and confusion; for though he could not clearly account for it, he now firmly believed Edmond and she had been longer acquainted than he knew of, and that it was on *his* account she had rejected Charles.

Charles was of the same opinion, and doubly enraged at being thus as he imagined imposed upon by a brother.

“ Yes, young man, be assured those hopes are for ever at an end. For the friendship I bear your father, I forbear to reproach you as you deserve; take your last look of this undutiful girl, and take my word for it that the next time you meet,  
if

if ever you do, you shall find her the wife of your brother."

The lovers, now clasping their hands in silent agony, gazed on each other with unutterable tenderness. Charles cast a look of insulting triumph on Edmond, whose heart was too deeply interested in the fate of his lovely Belinda to pay any attention to it; he still hoped the hour would come when he should triumph in his turn. Miss Mennill had assured him he alone possessed her tenderest affections, and though she had withstood all his fond solicitations to become his wife without her father's permission, which he had, with all the engaging eloquence he was master of, pressed her to do, yet she had solemnly vowed never to give her hand to another. With this sweet consolation, he was compelled to resign her for the present, finding all attempts to detain her must be in vain. Had he had Charles only to contend with, the case would have been different; but he  
could



could not bring himself to violate the respect due to the father of her he loved more than life.

Perfuated they had now conquered, they ordered the door of the carriage to be opened. Belinda, oppressed as she was with this distressing event, yet found an opportunity to say in a whisper to her distracted lover—"do not yield to despair, my amiable Edmond; if I live I will yet be your's." He had only time to look his gratitude; she was now, more dead than alive, put into it, and without permitting her to take leave of her kind friends at the farm, away they drove. 'Tis hard to say which of the two lovers were most wretched.

The impertinent raptures Charles attempted to assume highly disgusted poor Belinda. Her father's stern behaviour during the painful journey was but little calculated to afford her any consolation. His thoughts were deeply employed on the  
means

means necessary to be taken in order to get her fairly married, that he might be relieved from all farther trouble. He scarce opened his lips 'till they were set down at his own door. There Charles took his leave, putting on all the airs of an adoring lover; and 'tis certain he again thought her the loveliest, the most desirable creature he ever beheld, and was as passionately in love with her as it was in his nature to be with any of her sex. To every sentiment of delicacy he was an utter stranger: the aversion he could not but see she felt for him, therefore gave him no concern; he was clearly of opinion that aversion must at all events be the consequence of marriage, and its having the start of the ceremony he thought made mighty little difference.

He now returned to Sir John, exulting in his success, and looking upon both her and her fortune as his own.

CHAPTER

## CHAPTER XIV.

**B**ELINDA was ordered to prepare for accompanying him to church on the third day after her return home. All resistance she found would be in vain; she determined then to comply; but when there, her last resource to declare freely to the clergyman that compulsion alone had brought her there, fully persuaded he durst not so far prophane the sacred ceremony as to proceed after such a declaration. What the consequence might be she knew not; dreadful no doubt; but at least it would put an end to her father's present design, and things might take a more favourable turn; nay even Charles she hoped would after so public  
an

an affront, if he had a grain of spirit, reject her hand in his turn. Having thus made up her mind, she felt some degree of ease, and sitting down, wrote a particular account of all that happened, to her friend Lady Sedley, who, as we have said, set off for Windfor the day after she had conveyed Miss Mennill to Oak Farm, and with whom she had corresponded constantly during her stay there. She also informed her ladyship of the resolution she had formed; nor was it a new idea, having frequently in the course of this business talked of putting that desperate plan in execution, should she, as she feared, be driven to extremities; she now also intreated her friend to ask Sir James's opinion of it, and if possible let her know what it was before the fatal moment arrived.

This, Lady Sedley did not fail to do; and, to Belinda's infinite satisfaction, she found he approved highly of it, saying—  
“ it *must* at least put off the evil hour, and in all human probability for ever.”

Thus



Thus encouraged, she did her utmost to fortify her mind, and prepare it for the important trial she had to go through.

Mr. Mennill, tho' now well assured her affections were placed on another, yet believed she would make no farther resistance, finding it could answer no purpose; he therefore began to lay aside some degree of his severity, and felt he had not wholly lost the tenderness of a father.

The dreaded morning at length arrived: Sir John, his son, and a lady who was asked to be of the cruel party, were at Mr. Mennill's by ten o'clock. The poor trembling, agitated Belinda heard the sound of their carriage, and too well guessing who it was, had nearly fainted as she sat in her dressing-room waiting for the horrid summons. Wilson's officious attention and affected tenderness disgusted her; yet it saved her from swooning, as she prevailed upon her to take a few drops.

Mr.

Mr. Mennill, contrary to her hopes, came up himself to lead her down. She endeavoured to rise as he entered, but could not, so great was her agitation; she was almost breathless; she took out her smelling bottle—she begged a glass of water. Never was a creature in so wretched a condition as poor Belinda; even her obdurate, her cruel father, felt some symptoms of remorse, but stifling them as well as he could, took her hand saying—“ come, come, my dear daughter, it will be soon over, and you will be the happiest girl in England; come, let me lead you down.”

She now arose—“ lead me, Sir, where you please, cried she, tears, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, falling down her pale cheek: “ be quick, Sir, O let me not have time to think—lead me to the carriage—spare me the horror of seeing the insensible wretch who has thus by his base endeavours contrived to steel my father’s once affectionate heart against his child—  
let

let me not see him till there is an absolute necessity for it, lest my courage should forsake me."

She followed him, scarce able to support her tottering frame. Her father *now*, willing to indulge her, put her into his own carriage, and himself only getting into it with her, bid a servant tell Sir John and the rest of the company to follow.

They too soon reached the church for Miss Mennill's peace—he led her in. The triumphant bridegroom, assuming an air of tenderness, took his place by her side. The clergyman began the solemn service, and had just got to the question—"wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?"—to which Charles was bowing his assent, when a young lady stepped from one of the pews where she had been concealed, and coming forward with a timid air, to their utter astonishment and confusion cried, "stop, Sir; he cannot give his hand to  
that

that lady 'till I am laid in my grave ; behold in me the lawful, though much injured wife of the faithless, the perjured Charles Maynard.

Miss Mennill in the greatest consternation, thought her an angel sent from heaven to save her from wretchedness. Joy and amazement had nearly produced the same effects that sorrow had done before. She staggered to the rails of the communion table, and leaning against them in order to support herself, stood in an almost lifeless state viewing a scene absolutely incomprehensible. Charles no sooner cast his eyes upon the—to him—most unwelcome intruder, than with a face pale as death he exclaimed, “ heaven and earth ! what do I see ? ” then endeavouring to recover some little presence of mind, he added, “ Woman, by what authority have you thus dared to —— ”

“ Be



“Be calm, Mr. Maynard,” cried the stranger, interrupting him with a dignity in her manner which plainly testified she was no impostor, “do not attempt by affecting ignorance, to add to your guilt. ’Tis too late, Sir. Well do you know I can, and—you have only yourself to thank for it—the hour is at last come in which I have determined to assert my right.” Then turning to Sir John, who stood petrified with horror, she continued—“Yes, Sir, in me you behold the wife of that ungenerous, that unworthy son; and I trust, if you will deign to hear my unfortunate story, however much you may think me to blame you will confess I am still more to be pitied.”

“What am I think of all this?” cried Sir John, darting a look of indignation on the evidently guilty Charles: speak, Sir, instantly speak, and tell me without prevarication what you have done.”

“His son was silent.

M

’Tis

“ 'Tis well, Sir ;” continued Sir John, “ that fullen silence tells but too plainly what I have to expect. Be gone ! fly ! never, never presume to appear again in my presence unless fully able to clear yourself from this horrid accusation.”

Charles, the guilty Charles, had not courage to reply. The lady, basely as he had injured her, made an attempt to plead for him.

“ If you wish to prove yourself the injured wife you pretend, madam,” cried Sir John, interrupting her, “ or have any desire that I should hear patiently what you have to say for yourself, plead not for a wretch you ought, if what you assert is true, to look upon with abhorrence. In justice I cannot refuse to hear you : take then *his* place in my carriage, which I must, till he is able to prove his innocence, think him unworthy to fill ; and go home with me, that my painful curiosity may be immediately

mediately gratified." Then again turning to his son, "Go, Sir," said he; "you know the terms on which alone we can ever meet again."

To paint the situation of Mr. Mennill's mind during this wonderful scene, or that of his now happy daughter, is far beyond the power of my abilities. I must leave it to the imagination of my readers to conceive the various emotions they had both experienced. So violent were Sir John's still, that he had almost forgot the purpose for which they were there assembled.— Charles, like a guilty criminal, now quitted the church without having the courage to look one of the company in the face. This roused Sir John from the reverie he had fallen into. He turned to Mr. Mennill, but felt himself at a loss for expression.— At last, "O my friend," cried he, "how have I been deceived! how ought we all to rejoice at that amiable creature's fortunate escape—looking tenderly at Belinda—if

M 2

what

what we have just heard is true. But true or not, I fear, yes I fear we have both been to blame. Can you, Miss Mennill, generously pardon the too great part I have taken in thus distressing you? Can you, my dear young lady, in consideration of a father's partiality for a child he believed worthy even to possess so great a treasure as yourself, can you forgive the trouble and anxiety I have occasioned you? Gladly, most gladly, would I believe he is not guilty; yet alas appearances are too strongly against him to warrant my indulging this delightful hope."

"O Sir," cried the gentle-hearted Belinda, softened even to tears by this speech of Sir John's, "do not add to my distress by doubting it a moment. All I ask in return for the favour you deign to ask is, that you will intercede for me with my beloved father, prevail on him to restore me once more to the place in his affections I have so unfortunately



unfortunately lost, and be assured every past transaction shall on my part be forgot."

"Come to my arms, my dear girl," cried Mr. Mennill, "and let me press you to my heart. Belinda, my dear Belinda, I fear I have not been quite so good a father as you have deserved."

His enraptured daughter ran and fondly threw her arms about him, tears of joy streaming from her fine eyes, crying "O Sir, spare me, spare your poor girl! this is far greater happiness than she is able to bear. Continue but to be thus kind, and your Belinda shall make it the study of her future life how to deserve it."

"I will do more," said her repentant father; "yes, I will do more; I will try to make an atonement for what is past, and of such a nature as I trust will be most acceptable to your heart, my dear girl. What it is I will inform my friend Sir John, whose approbation

approbation I shall find necessary before I can firmly promise it, as soon as we have gained some degree of tranquillity."

Belinda guessed what he meant, and could hardly conceal the pleasing emotions which now filled her breast. A sweet smile of content and gratitude appeared on her expressive countenance, which plainer than any language could have done, spoke her thanks.

They now prepared to quit a place which had witnessed so unexpected a revolution in her affairs. She had a great curiosity to hear the lady's story, and feared it would not be gratified so soon as she wished. Sir John however intreated Mr. Mennill and his daughter would indulge him with their company for the rest of the day, saying they no doubt wished, and certainly had a right to hear, what motives the lady then present had for acting in the manner she had that morning done. To this they readily agreed ;

agreed; and having taken leave of the astonished clergyman, who I have not a doubt would gladly have been of the party, they drove to Sir John's; where having taken a dish of chocolate, and sat half an hour to give the lady time to recollect herself, she at their request began what she had to say in the following manner:

“ 'Tis now,” said she, addressing herself to Sir John, “ near two years since I first had—must I call it a misfortune—to see your son at a ball given after the races at Stamford. My father's name was Beverley. He was a colonel of a regiment of dragoons, and of a family I need not blush to be descended from. You may possibly know them, Sir: they have a considerable estate in that part of the country. He was a younger son, of course had but little fortune besides his commission. He married a woman of family also; but she had only merit and beauty to recommend her: this my father thought sufficient, though  
his

his did not. I was born in the first year of their marriage, and had the irreparable misfortune to lose my mother before I had attained my tenth year.

I was now put under the care of an aunt of her's, who had from my infancy been tenderly attached to me. My worthy and most amiable father survived her only four years. All he could leave me was about five hundred pounds. I will not, Sir, trespass on your patience by unnecessary particulars. I had no friend now on whom I could depend but my aunt, who had indeed, as far as woman could do, supplied to me the loss of a mother. With her, I continued to live as happily as it was possible for one to do who had been thus at so early an age deprived of parents so justly dear to her.

At this ball your son was pleased to distinguish me by every possible attention. He asked permission to visit me. My aunt on  
my



my account was flattered by it. Sorry am I to say I too soon found his views were such as I could not encourage. He was now forbid the house. I was shocked—I was mortified. Conscious that in my conduct he could have seen nothing on which to found those ungenerous hopes he presumed to entertain. My young heart too felt most severely the cruel disappointment; for he had by his insinuating, his engaging manners, gained but too great an interest in it. Yet sensible he no longer deserved the place he had held in it, I determined to see him no more.

“ He now wrote to me every hour. I had the fortitude to return all his letters unopened. At last he addressed himself to my aunt: he offered to marry me; implored her mediation; assured her she should herself be witness to the ceremony: all he asked was that our union might be kept a secret till he could without hazard reveal it

to his father. My aunt, whose declining health made her anxious for my fate, advised me to reflect seriously on his proposal. Alas ! I was but too much inclined to obey. In short we were married.

“ I had given him my solemn promise to wait his time for declaring it : and though in less than six months I had the mortification to find he beheld me with cold indifference, and no doubt condemned himself for the step he had taken, yet so sacred did I hold the promise I had made him, that I never would have betrayed his secret had it not been with a view to save this lady from even a more wretched fate than my own.

“ After the first six months of our unfortunate union, I rarely saw him ; and but seldom had even the consolation of hearing from him ; before the end of the year I was rendered completely miserable by the loss of my affectionate aunt.

“ Having

“ Having lost his faithless heart, my delicacy, my pride was such, that I scorned being indebted to him for any pecuniary favours. Small as my fortune was, I determined it should serve me.

“ I continued in the house where I had so many years resided, and your son, Sir, will I trust do me the justice to acknowledge, sustained my unhappy lot without a murmur; reproaches I well knew would only serve to exasperate him, to time alone I trusted for some happy change in my situation. What I suffered, I will not attempt to describe. I at last heard of his intended marriage with Miss Mennill; I also heard the lady was averse to it. I therefore hoped it would not take place. I was informed by a friend of every step taken to accomplish it. I trembled for the amiable creature who was thus on the brink of ruin. My promise I no longer looked upon as binding; on the contrary I felt it my indispensable duty to prevent it.

“ The

The resignation with which I had hitherto submitted to his cruel neglect, had no doubt persuaded him I had given over all thoughts of ever being acknowledged as his wife, and probably made me indifferent to his conduct ; and he was in some measure right : I had too long been fatally convinced I had nothing to hope for, nor should I have made any attempts to interrupt his pleasures, if such they can with propriety be called, had he not formed this unpardonable, this guilty plan. Self, I can with truth affirm, was with me out of the question. Well did I know, that by betraying as I have now done his important secret, I must lose every hope ; but I had the heart-felt consolation to know that in doing it I acted as I ought.

“ This, Sir, is a very brief account of my unhappy situation,” said the lady ;  
“ should any doubts remain in your breast in regard to the certainty of my ill-fated marriage, ’tis amply in my power, I thank heaven,



heaven, to remove them. I mean to ask your intercession in my favour with the cruel author of all my woes; no, Sir, I now look upon him with more than indifference, not for worlds would I again put myself under the protection of a man my reason, my best judgment, compels me to despise. Forgive me, Sir John, this harsh expression; I have alas! but too much cause to make use of it, and permit me to add before I conclude, I neither expect nor desire any favour from him, or any of his family, than to stand acquitted of blame. The little I possess shall suffice to maintain me while an inhabitant of this world; long I trust that will not be; yet if it is the will of heaven that I am not so soon as I earnestly wish to be released from it, I will, as I have hitherto done, submit to its all wise decrees with what fortitude and resignation I am able."

Thus the amiable, and no less unfortunate Mrs. Maynard, as we must now call her,

her, ended her story. Belinda was charmed not only with her appearance, but the spirited manner in which she had ended her little unfortunate narrative; she admired her noble pride, and longed to be better acquainted with so young a creature, for she did not appear to be above eighteen years of age, who had conducted herself on so trying an occasion with so much propriety and great understanding.

She would now have taken her leave; but Sir John, who was no less prejudiced in her favour than Miss Mennill, kindly said he could not part with her so soon; he had many questions to ask, many interesting things to say to her, as well as many things to settle; for though she with becoming pride had told him she expected nothing *from him*, she must give him permission to act in this particular business as he might think proper. She was his daughter, and as such he must teach her obedience to his commands. This he said with so pleasing

pleasing a smile that it was pretty plain to his friends he did not mean they should be very severe.

The rest of the day was passed as agreeable as could be expected after the event of the morning. Sir John did not once mention his son; of course no other person would do it. When the hour of parting arrived, Sir John would have his carriage to set his daughter down, but Belinda begged he would permit her and her father to have that pleasure; this was agreed to, and they found she had from the time Charles's marriage had been first talked of, been with a friend of her's in Seymour-street, that she might be at hand to put her design of preventing it into execution.— Here then they set her down, Belinda asking permission to call upon her the next day, which was granted with great pleasure; and Mr. Mennill now conveyed his daughter home, still Miss Mennill, with more real satisfaction than he could possibly have experienced had he succeeded in the purpose for which he left it.

The

The astonishment and sad disappointment of Mrs. Wilson on seeing her young lady return unmarried, I will pass over, only observing that it was great ; indeed all her hopes of figuring in a higher line than merely housekeeper vanished at once.

CHAPTER



## CHAPTER XV.

CHARLES Maynard, on leaving the church, found his mind in such a state of distraction that he, for a few moments, thought the wisest thing he could do in order to compose it was to shoot himself thro' the head. That he never could see his father on the terms offered, he well knew; conscious that all the lady asserted was strictly true, and that she not only could, but no doubt would clearly prove it to be so. She had long ceased giving him any trouble,

trouble, or concerning herself about him, that he flattered himself she never would; his affairs were so deranged, his debts so much greater than he had any hopes of being able to discharge, that he had no resource but agreeing to the match proposed by his father. He endeavoured to persuade himself if he could but bring that business to a happy conclusion he could not only satisfy his creditors, but also his injured wife, by purchasing her silence. Her past resignation encouraged him to believe this would be attended with no great difficulty; but we have seen he mistook her character. He was now convinced to his utter confusion he had, nor knew which way to turn himself. The idea of having recourse to a pistol had, while making some no very pleasant reflections, gradually evaporated; he considered that was in his power at any time, and it was too serious a business to be done in a hurry; yet I think I may venture to say, if not done in a hurry, it will be seldom done at all.

He

He now determined to try the efficacy of a letter to Sir John, which should contain a full confession of his guilt, of his penitence, and of his purpose to quit England immediately if he would be graciously pleased to afford him the means of it.

He immediately sat down and wrote the letter which was to decide his fate; should the answer be unfavourable, he might then take the pistol scheme again into consideration, and indeed it appeared to him in that case the only remedy left.

Sir John was shocked beyond all expression on finding how grossly he had been deceived in the opinion he had formed of his favourite son, and began when too late to find a man of the world, a man of fashion and *bon ton*, was not quite so desirable a character as he had till now absurdly believed. The amiable, the accomplished Edmond now occurred to him, and he could not but confess it was likely to do him more credit

credit than he had any reason to expect from the guilty Charles, were his repentance ever so sincere. In his first emotions he was tempted to throw his letter with just indignation into the fire without deigning to answer it, and leave him to his fate; however, on reflection, he took up his pen, and in few words told him he would, on condition he instantly left the kingdom, allow him enough, and perhaps, should his future conduct merit so great a favour, a little more than to save him from starving.

Charles on receiving it was again tempted to apply to his friend, the pistol. The word starving was the most unpleasant his eyes had ever encountered. He paused; he turned his thoughts on every side; and at last decided on going abroad; he should at least see the world, tho' he might not have it in his power fully to enjoy the pleasures of it. Some lucky circumstance might even render that possible; he might be fortunate



fortunate at play: how many men had he known who figured in life with no other resource; hitherto 'tis true he had not been very successful, but fortune was fickle, she might give her wheel a turn in his favour.

He ordered a post-chaise, and next morning set off for Dover, having received from his father his first quarter's allowance—a few days before it would have appeared a very trifling sum, scarce more than sufficient to serve him a tenth part of the time it was now destined for; but there was no help for it; in the first moment of Sir John's wrath it would have been a folly to expect a greater indulgence. Time he hoped would mitigate it, and the next remittance of course be more ample. He arrived in safety at Calais, and from thence set off for Paris, where, wishing him all the felicity he merits, let us leave him to do the best he can.

While

While Sir John was employed in settling the above mortifying business, and Mr. Mennill considering in what manner he should best bring about a plan he had formed by which he meant to give Belinda an agreeable surprise, she was writing the following letter to her friend, Lady Sedley.

Oh my dear, dear friend, how shall I give you an idea of my present joy ; words I am certain never can do it. Ah why are you not in town that you might have the pleasure of seeing me absolutely out of my wits. Never, never sure was there so unlooked for, so happy a change as in the situation of your poor Belinda. But the means by which this delightful revolution was brought about—'tis this, my beloved Lady Sedley, I wish to relate, but how, or where to begin, I actually am still so completely astonished, I know not ; let me however attempt it.

“ The

“ The miserable, the dreadful, and justly dreaded moment arrived, in which I was to be led to church, as my father believed, with less reluctance than he had any reason to expect. Ah little, very little, did he guess I was on the contrary determined when there to give him convincing proofs he was deceived. Thank heaven, that trial was spared me ; I had no occasion to put my desperate plan in execution, and now tremble at the bare thought, that it might possibly, if I had, not have saved me from the fate I feared.

“ I leave you, my dear friend, to imagine what were my feelings when led to the carriage by my father ; I was more dead than alive ; such a bride, so pale, so death like, sure never was seen. Well—the vile, infamous Charles, elate with hope, and triumphing in the mischief he had so nearly wrought, stuck himself up at your Belinda’s side, attempting to assume an air proper for the occasion. Horrid wretch!—little did  
any

any of us dream at that distracting moment it was not *his first appearance* in that character. The clergyman began the solemn service, I in terrors inconceivable listening to him lest I should miss the proper moment to put a stop to it. At last——  
 “ wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?” the creature was in the act of giving his consent, when out of one of the pews came a lovely young woman, and stepping forward, exclaimed——“ hold, Sir: he cannot, shall not give that hand to any other than myself till I am laid in my silent grave; ’tis mine, lawfully mine.” \*

\* *useless repetition*

“ Figure to yourself, my dear Lady Sedley, our unspeakable consternation; for my part, all I wonder at is that the joyful surprise did not kill me; indeed I was for some time almost lifeless, and hardly heard what passed from that highly important moment ’till that in which I found myself again in the carriage, my father tenderly supporting me, Sir John and the young creature I have



have mentioned seated on the opposite side. All to me appeared a dream ; I durst hardly credit my senses ; I looked timidly around, but finding the detested Charles was not with us, began to be enough composed to trust I was really awake.

“ We were set down at Sir John’s ; my father I found having agreed to spend the day with him, in order to talk over this strange affair, and for that purpose had also brought home the angel, as I had good reason to call her, who had thus saved me from despair and misery.

“ When we had in some measure got over the surprise and acquired a tolerable degree of composure, the lady gave us the particulars of her unfortunate story ; but those I shall reserve ’till we meet, and only tell my dear friend that she actually is, and has been his truly wretched wife near two years.

N

“ Judge

“ Judge what were poor Sir John’s sensations on having this wonderful circumstance confirmed beyond all doubt ; finding she had been blameless, and had behaved under her misfortunes with a prudence, a resignation, that few women I fear would have had the fortitude to do, Sir John, taking her tenderly by the hand, bid her be comforted, and from that moment look upon him as a father. She is of a good family, has lost both her parents, and at the time she became acquainted with the cruel wretch who has for ever destroyed her peace lived with an aunt.

“ Ah ! what a fickle, what an insensible wretch he must indeed be who could thus abandon so lovely, so amiable a creature ; for she is truly so, my dear Lady Sedley, as I am sure you will confess when acquainted with her, which you will soon be I hope, for I must have your permission to introduce her when you come to town ; and I am sure you will not let it be very  
long

long before you give me the joy of seeing you ; for I have much, very much to say, many things to tell you, many more than I can croud into a sheet or two of paper.—Ten thousand hopes—as many fears—O Lady Sedley, is it then in nature that Edmond may yet be mine ! Was I to blame ? tell me freely. Yet surely I was not. Could I do less than make him a partaker in my present happiness ? I every moment expect to receive an answer filled with the genuine effusions of his tender, his truly feeling heart. I now rejoice that my father is apprized of our mutual attachment : never, never shall I forget his astonishment when he so unexpectedly made the discovery, nor the guilty Charles's rage on finding a so justly favoured rival in his brother. Heavens ! with what contempt, what insulting triumph did he look upon him when they with so much cruelty tore me from his arms ; but I trust he will soon triumph in his turn ; yes soon, my dear friend ; I guess so, from some kind words which my now

N 2

truly

truly affectionate father dropped on finding what a viper he had cherished in his bosom. Persuaded he has generously formed a design of this nature I shall leave the management of it wholly to himself; pretty certain I shall yet be most compleatly happy, I can patiently wait his time.

“ I have once since the memorable day of days seen my lovely deliverer, and, as I have already told you, find her a most amiable and deserving creature; 'tis our opinion, my father's and mine I mean, that Sir John intends inviting her to live with him; what indeed can he do better? I am sure she has it in her power, by her various accomplishments, to render home more agreeable to him than he has by all accounts found it for some years; and I am certain it will be a pleasing study to her to make him sensible of the agreeable change. In spite of the shocking treatment she had met with, she yet wished to intercede with him in favour of his worthless son; but he  
stopped



stopped her at once, telling her he would patiently hear her on any subject except *that*; desiring it might never be touched upon unless he himself led to it. This was said in so decisive a manner that no reply could be made.

“ My father tells me the creature is going abroad; 'tis the very best thing he can do; for as to a reconciliation with his wife, 'tis out of the question, even granting he wished it, which I have no reason to believe; but she I am certain would on no terms hear of it; and no wonder, my dear Lady Sedley, after the treatment she has so undeservedly met with.

“ I vow were he *full* brother to the engaging Edmond, I should have my fears; but he is not—they had different mothers. Ah! how very different are they themselves. Adieu! my beloved friend; I trust I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in a day or two.

“ Think

“ Think how doubly fortunate I was in having the dreadful ceremony interrupted, without my intentions of doing it as I had proposed being discovered ; by this happy event my father remains ignorant of my premeditated disobedience.

“ Before I conclude this letter, permit me to return you my hearty thanks for those excellent books you have sent me ; but in a more particular manner for the four following ones, Lord Winworth, or the Memoirs of an Heir, Edward and Harriet, or the Happy Recovery, Sophia, or the Embarrassed Wife, and Pleasing Variety, containing six new novels ; for as your ladyship very justly observes, that for humor, delicacy, and sentiment, they far exceed any publications that have appeared for many years, and I sincerely join in wishing the publisher (who I find lives in Duke’s Court, St. Martin’s Lane) every success so valuable a collection deserves, and think they ought to be read by every family in the kingdom.

*puff ! puff ! puff !* “ And

“ And now, my dear Lady Sedley, once more adieu ! My best respects to Sir James, and believe me my dear Lady Sedley’s ever affectionate

BELINDA MENNILL.

P. S. How Sir James and your ladyship are to get out of the scrape you got into by giving my father so pleasant a ramble, heaven knows. Should he ever discover, I mean, that it was all a contrivance of your’s ; yet I now think he is in so good a humour, so delighted to reflect on my hair’s breadth escape, that I absolutely believe he would laugh heartily at it ; but we will talk that matter over when we meet.”

Edmond’s sensations, while reading the few lines sent him by his adored Belinda may be more easily imagined than described ; they were those of a lover ; a thousand times he pressed the paper to his lips, a thousand times he read over the delightful, the astonishing contents.

She

She had ordered him to have patience—to take no step towards seeing her till he heard from her again; this he was tempted to pronounce cruel, but checked himself, for well he knew his lovely Belinda was incapable of it. He endeavoured to obey without murmuring; how long he might have done so is uncertain, but to his infinite joy, the trial of his forbearance and resignation was not so long as he feared it would have been. A letter from the father of his beloved, set his agitated heart at rest, if one may pronounce a heart at rest which the contents of it had thrown into the most violent emotions of joy. That my readers may with more ease be able to decide the question, I will transcribe Mr. Mennill's letter for their perusal.



## CHAPTER XVI.

TO EDMOND MAYNARD, Esq.

MY eyes are opened—the first use I will make of them is to see you in Portland Place; at our last meeting I was blind—let that be my apology for not being able to distinguish a rascal from a man of worth. If you, Edmond, are that man which a *friend of your's* has taken some pains to persuade me you are, set off without loss of time; strange things have happened. Your father and I have hitherto acted like a pair of old fools; we have seen our error, and that too before 'tis too late, which does not always happen to be the case.

N<sup>o</sup> 3

Not

Not a line from you to the friend above mentioned ; mind I forbid that ; I wish to give her a surprise ; agreeable as I believe it will be, do not however flatter yourself it can equal that she last met with. Set off instantly, and depend upon a welcome reception from

Your's,

EDWARD MENNILL.

If excess of joy could kill, Edmond must have died ; he did not, therefore we have proved the assertion, that such have occasionally been its effects, false.

His carriage was at the door in less than an hour after he had received the transporting summons, and by three o'clock set him down at Mr. Mennill's door.

Belinda was at that moment sitting in the drawing room with her father ; he was reading a newspaper, the *Lord Winworth, or the Memoirs of an Heir*. A servant entered, announcing Mr. Edmond Maynard, who instantly followed. Belinda, starting, threw

threw down her book, and was on the point of flying towards him, but checked herself, and turned her eyes on her father in order to see by his looks what reception her lover was likely to meet with, believing he had disobeyed her commands, and come unsent for.

Mr. Mennill guessed the cause of her embarrassment, and smiling cried—"why, Belinda, is this the kindest welcome you have to bestow on a friend of mine?"

"Oh, my dear Sir," said his daughter, "how good, how——"

"Come, come, no more of this; let me see if you have yet *learned obedience?*" When taking the delighted Edmond by the hand, and leading him to his daughter, he added—"prove to me that you *have* by receiving this young man as the person I have made choice of for your husband—let me have no whimpering, huffy, no tears," continued he, in the same agreeable tone, "for I will be obeyed."

Edmond

Edmond now took her unreluctant hand and pressed it to his lips, with an expression in his fine eyes which plainly told both father and daughter he thought himself the most fortunate and happiest of men.

“ Oh, Sir,” cried the blushing Belinda, “ how shall I ever repay such unbounded kindness, how thank you as I wish for this proof of your affection ?”

“ Why, my dear girl, the only way I can point out to you for that purpose,” replied he, “ is, I think, to forget I ever was less so.”

Just at this happy moment, Sir John Maynard's coach stopped at the door. His surprise on finding Edmond already there, for he knew Mr. Mennill intended sending for him, but did not imagine it would have been quite so soon, was nearly as great as Belinda's.

All was now harmony and heartfelt satisfaction. The day was passed in a manner infinitely



infinitely more pleasing to the two fathers than any they had passed for many years, perhaps in their lives.

Lady Sedley and Sir James came to town next day; her ladyship went immediately to call upon her now happy friend. Their meeting was affectionately tender. After a thousand kind congratulations on the unexpected change in Belinda's affairs—"but, my dear girl," said Lady Sedley, "what shall I say to your father, how make my peace with him, should he find out the wicked trick I played him? I absolutely have not courage to see him, lest his first question should be to ask me for my neighbours the *Selbys*; I shall die if he does, that's certain, and I fear 'tis no less certain he will. Yet after all, my dear Miss Mennill, I did not press him to gallop off to Scarborough, Harrowgate, York, and the Lord knows where, *that* was his own doings."

"Indeed, indeed," cried Miss Mennill, "your ladyship is in a woeful scrape; thank heaven

heaven one party concerned is no longer to be feared, he is otherwise disposed of."

"Well but do tell me," said her ladyship eagerly, "what shall I say, how shall I contrive to get out of it with a tolerable grace? upon my life I dread our meeting."

Scarce had she uttered these words when to her confusion Mr. Mennill entered the room.

"I fear I interrupt your *tete a tete*," said he, smiling. "Belinda I suppose, has been telling your ladyship she has conquered, and is in a fair way to have her own way at last, in spite of all the trouble I have taken to prevent it. I confess she is a sly gypsey, and has led her poor father a pretty dance. By the bye I have to thank your ladyship for part of it. A fine wildgoose chase you sent me to. I must have a long reckoning with you and Sir James about that confounded business. There did I gallop two or three hundred miles after your neighbours

bours

bours the Selby's, but never could I overtake them. No great matter indeed, as you now know I suppose; for Sophy I find never even heard of them till I told her of my rambles; who the devil was it that told you she was with them? you see it was all a lie."

"Will you promise, my dear Sir, to forgive me if I tell you the whole truth?" cried Lady Sedley, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and looking up in his face with a most bewitching smile.

"Hey day!" replied he, "what am I to guess by this sly preface? Have you too, as well as herself, had a hand in the plot?"

"Not a word till you promise to forgive me," answered her ladyship. "I am not obliged to confess, you know, my good friend, but I own I long to unburthen my conscience."

"So,

“ So, so,” cried Mr. Mennill, no wonder my girl had courage to dispute my authority, since she had the sanction of a person whom she is silly enough to look upon as a pattern of every perfection. Come out with it,” continued he; “ down upon your knees; let me have all the truth and nothing but the truth, and trust to my mercy. Thank your stars I am not in the humour at present to be absolutely inflexible.”

“ No wonder, my dear Sir,” said her ladyship, “ our Belinda never heard of the Selbys; for the fact is I am by no means certain any such family ever existed.”

“ Not exist !” said he in amaze; “ why they lived next door to you I thought.”

“ Ah, Sir,” cried she.

“ Come, come, I will not humble you too far,” continued he smiling, “ since I find  
by



by that *ab* Sir, you show some signs of true penitence. Well, and so you have the face to tell me that pretty story was all a hum, have you?"

"I have indeed," replied Lady Sedley, affecting to dread his resentment.

"And you actually knew nothing about my daughter at that time?" said he,

"O yes," replied she, "full well I knew every thing about her; for instead of the Selbys, it was I myself who conveyed her away."

"You did?" cried Mr. Mennill.  
"Mighty well. Pray proceed; no stop: prithee before you go any farther tell me did that rascal Charles Maynard, or did he not, see her at your house as he affirmed."

"He did indeed," replied she.

"What

“What the very night before, as he declared?”

“Yes, exactly so.”

“She was with you at the time we called then, was she?”

“O no; she was by that time, my dear Sir, on the very spot where you found her.”

“Why how the devil can that be?” cried he; “just now you told me you yourself conveyed her away; take care, or you’ll make a bungling story of it.”

“Not at all, my dear Sir, if you will only encourage the poor culprit to proceed by a gracious smile now and then during her recital.”

“Why with what a pair of pretty plotting

ting gypsies have I had to deal all this time," said he. "Well, go on.

"Sir James was the identical person your late favourite Charles——"

"O confound him?" exclaimed Mr. Mennill.

"He, I say, continued Lady Sedley, "was the very person who was attacked by footpads; and so Sir, as Charles came to his relief, he could not do less than ask him in that he might thank him at leisure for the favour; and there Sir, to his most agreeable surprise, he found your daughter and me sitting quietly, chatting, little expecting so unwelcome a guest. After this we concluded Wimpole street was no longer a place of safety. I ordered my post chaise, whipped into it with the dear girl, set her down at my honest friend Thompson's, and instantly returned to town in order to have the honor to receive your visit the next day;

day ; which I made no doubt I should be favored with in consequence of the intelligence the amiable Charles would hardly fail to give you. This, Sir, is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, &c. and down she dropped on her knee at his feet in a supplicating attitude.

He could not withstand this ; but raising her, laughed heartily at the contrivance, crying “ why what a bugbear of a fellow must I be ? ”

“ Pardon me there,” cried her ladyship ; “ ’twas not you, my dear Sir, from whom we fled, but your vile companion.”

“ Thank you,” said he, “ thank you for that happy turn. So I am to forgive you both, am I ? ”

“ If you please,” cried the ladies, each taking a hand, curtsying, and smiling in his face.

“ Well,



“ Well, if I must, I must,” cried Mr. Mennill; “ but I had a cursed jaunt of it for all that.”

“ Nay I vow,” cried Lady Sedley, “ I deserve a handsome fee for that prescription ; it has done you a world of good, has n’t it, my dear Belinda ? Did you ever see Mr. Mennill look so well ?”

“ And you prescribed it merely for the benefit of my health,” said he, “ did you ?”  
[an arch look.]

After chatting a while in this agreeable manner, Lady Sedley took her leave ; having first promised Sir James and herself would dine with them the next day, on condition Edmond should be of the party, as she was impatient to be introduced to him. Belinda begged she would come some hours before dinner, as she wanted to go a shopping, and had many things to say to her.

Sir

Sir John Maynard, his son Edmond, and poor Mrs. Maynard, met Sir James and Lady Sedley at Mr. Mennill's the following day about five o'clock. The only bar to their happiness was a recollection of past scenes; however nothing was said by any of them likely to damp the pleasure of the party; even the unfortunate wife endeavoured to forget her sorrows, and by an amiable cheerfulness contribute all she could to promote it.

"What a divine fellow!" whispered Lady Sedley to Belinda when Edmond entered the room. "I never beheld so fine a figure; is it possible he can be as insensible of it as you would persuade me?"

"Wait till the day is over," replied her happy friend, then tell me whether you have any remaining doubts?

After dinner the ladies retired to the drawing room, where they were soon followed

lowed by the gentlemen, and various plans were formed for the evening.

“ Pray my good friend,” said Lady Sedley, “ where can we be happier than we are in this very room? do not let us, like too many of the world, give up the substance for the shadow.”

So saying, she went to the harpsichord, desiring Belinda would sing her favorite song. This she did without pressing or affecting to have a violent cold. Edmond, the delighted Edmond also took a part, they soon formed an agreeable though unpremeditated concert, and unanimously agreed Lady Sedley was right.

Before they parted, Sir John taking his daughter Belinda's hand, said, “ you have from the moment I entered the house so agreeably engaged my attention, my lovely girl, that I had very near left it without mentioning my chief motive for paying my  
respects

respects to you, perhaps Edmond may not have been quite so negligent."

"Pray, said the blushing Belinda," what can it be? sure I am, I find nothing to accuse you of. Sir John Maynard I fancy is not apt to be so wanting in every proper attention.

"And yet I certainly have on this occasion," replied he smiling, "for I have not yet asked when you will do me the honour to be of a party I proposed making to St. George's Church."

"Oh not St. George's," exclaimed poor Belinda involuntarily recollecting the scene which had so lately passed there."

"Very well, my dear girl," cried Sir John "it shall not be there then. You have no other objection I trust, and so my good friends," continued he smiling, "I invite you all to breakfast with me on Tuesday next,



next, from thence we will go to the first church we meet with, have a little chat with the clergyman, and return to dinner."

"Heavens Sir John, on Tuesday next, what do you mean?"

"O my meaning, I give you my honor, my dear Miss Mennill, is perfectly innocent; all I propose is to make you the happiest wife in England, that's all; now I'll be judged by this company, whether they can reasonably offer any objections to my plan."

They all smiled.

"*I do*, cried Lady Sedley, yes, I positively do object;" you now truly fancy you are to have every thing your own way. Belinda is wholly under my command, nor dare she murmur at any I do her the honor to lay upon her; I repeat, it *shall not* be Tuesday, but, looking sweetly on her agitated

tated friend, but—Wednesday. They shant, have all their own way, shall they, my dear girl?"

Edmond now took her ladyship's hand and pressing it to his lips, *looked* his gratitude."

Belinda cried, "how can you, my dear friend, talk in that unthinking manner? Upon my word I did not expect—"

"To follow my example *quite so soon*, I presume you were going to say, my dear," said Lady Sedley, smiling, but pray what have I to do with your expectations? on Wednesday then," continued she, turning to Sir John, "you may depend upon our being with you by ten o'clock. So good night—leave me to settle the business with this silly girl."

Edmond again pressed her hand with looks of gratitude, then turning to Belinda  
—"may

—“ may I, my amiable Miss Mennill, flatter myself that I shall not owe my felicity wholly to the arbitrary commands of my charming advocate ?”

“ Indeed I hardly know a word you have been saying,” replied she with a most engaging smile ; “ you are a teizing set of beings ; however when I have leisure I will consider how far you are obliged to my saucy friend who presumes thus to tyrannize over me ; if you do not find me of the party on Wednesday, you have only to conclude her boasted authority is not quite so great as she is pleased to suppose.”

He took her unreluctant hand, pressed it to his heart, and gazing on her with unspeakable tenderness, followed his father, who repeating the invitation, took his leave. Sir James and Lady Sedley soon did so likewise, the latter promising to be with her friend early in the morning.

She

She kept her word. The appointed day at length arrived.

I might now, my fair readers, treat you with a thousand particulars ; such as, how the lovely girl looked, how she was dressed, of her palpitations, her emotions, &c. but trust all these kind of matters have on similar occasions been so amply described by other historians, that you will readily forgive me if I spare both you and myself that trouble. Suffice it to say, that she was led to church in the character of Miss Mennill, and returned from it in that of Mrs. Maynard, fully persuaded there was not a happier woman than herself in the three kingdoms.

F I N I S.





